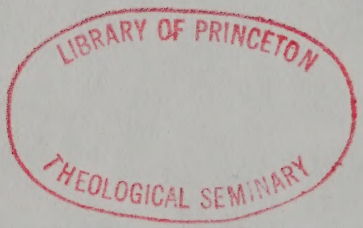

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The Reality of the Resurrection

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The Reality of the Resurrection

BY
G. R. H. SHAFTO

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PREFACE

I HAVE placed Mr Martin's sonnet in the forefront of these pages because I first met it at a time when Paul's phrase about " the power of his resurrection " was much in my thoughts. This little book is the result—for which Mr Martin is not in any way to blame. It is an attempt to find the path to the faith of Pentecost.

Obviously, the last thing to be claimed for any book with such a theme is originality. I have made free use of other workers in the field, and am grateful to many scholars and thinkers. I am also grateful to friends who have helped with personal counsel or suggestion and would like to acknowledge in particular the kindness of two, the Rev. F. Warburton Lewis and Mr A. Sharvell Cullwick, who have read through my MS. and given the benefit of their views.

Knowing how long I groped vainly for answers to some of the problems this great subject involves, I shall feel repaid if any inquiring mind is given the help for which I should have been thankful in days of difficulty.

G. R. H. SHAFTO.

WOLVERHAMPTON, 1930.

An upper room, and six-score gathered there,
A humble folk, fit butt for learned jeer,
They have no wealth to charm the people's ear,
Nor noble name, nor aught of wisdom's ware.

But their's is Love's constraining care
For men, once hated, by a Cross brought near,
And Hope new issued from a tomb. From fear
By Faith set free, a world to win they dare.

"This Jesus whom ye slew is deathless King,
The Jew's Messiah and the Gentile's Hope!"
Earth's farthest corner hears their challenge ring;
Light breaks on nations that in darkness grope.

A later age in like dire need we view.
Ours is their Lord. Ah, were their faith ours too!

HUGH MARTIN.

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For of the Soule the Bodie Form doth take ;
For Soule is Forme, and doth the Bodie make.

An Hymne in Honour of Beautie.
EDMUND SPENSER.

The Reality of the Resurrection

I

JESUS OF NAZARETH AND THE RISEN LORD

THE twentieth century has seen great additions to the literature concerning Jesus. His sayings and doings, once the peculiar province of the theologian and the divine, have afforded material of interest and value to historians, biographers, dramatists, novelists, essayists and journalists. The story of His life has even been serialised in a daily paper. The sacred writings of the Christian Church, which constitute the basis for all this literary output, have been handled with a freedom in which the "personal equation" of the writer frequently takes the place of disciplined study of the sources.

The reader of these modern products who is familiar with the Gospel records will at once notice that the majority of them are either vague or altogether silent concerning the resurrection. Some who approach the story as students of history say that the evidence for the resurrection is not satisfactory to their trained historic sense; and of these some will add that they accept the article of faith on the authority of the Church but decline to attempt its interpretation.

Others, to whom this standpoint does not appeal, find explanations of the story in the mistaken loyalty of the disciples, or in their misunderstanding of the Lord's teaching, or in their abnormal psychological condition at the time. Others say that something happened; but what it was is left an open question. Others, again, take it for granted that the "Life" of Jesus has been written when they have reached the tragic climax of Calvary.

Whatever excellences these versions may possess, one has only to turn to the four gospels to realise that the whole significance of the story is changed by such treatment. This is not a criticism, but merely the statement of an obvious fact.

The widespread interest in Jesus of Nazareth is a very great gain from the standpoint of Christianity, and so is the value of the modern emphasis on the historic fact of Jesus. It has done much to bring the Christian Gospel into a vital relationship with mankind; it has successfully related the Gospel teaching to human ideals and to human progress. Admiration and homage for the greatest Figure in human history are more widespread than at any other time in our era. That, however, will not suffice to meet the religious requirements of our race. Man needs more than something "for to admire"; and—a few rare spirits apart—cannot rest content with the progress of the race as his inspiration and his goal. Unless religion can afford some more compelling motive the philosophy of the mass of men will be "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die," and the idealism of the few will be overwhelmed by it.

Christianity has always been quite certain that idealism is not enough to constitute a working faith.

> "If Christ hath not been raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most pitiable."

Paul bluntly staked his whole faith on this supreme issue. He declared that the Christian religion stands or falls with the truth of the resurrection of Christ. Historic Christianity has endorsed his conviction. But apart from all question of orthodoxy man cannot remain indefinitely in an attitude of reverent uncertainty. Such uncertainty must give way either to a convinced unbelief or to a more assured and effective belief. The days of an "assenting" faith are over, and it is as well: to take a thing for granted, however august the assurances, is to risk the loss of its eternal significance and meaning.

The dictum of Channing—"There are none so likely to believe too little as those who began by believing too much"—has sound observation behind it. If a doctrine lives it will not be because it was once universally taken for granted, like the idea of a flat earth, but because of the living reality of which it is the vehicle. Dr W. R. Maltby has put this point quite clearly in relation to our subject.

> "If the Resurrection discloses new and wider horizons, and shows a world at once grander and more coherent, more spiritual and more intelligible,

it is no longer a difficulty for candid minds, but a revelation which goes far to authenticate itself. . . . The Resurrection may transcend the natural order: but when it is understood it must illumine the natural order and make one whole with it."[1]

The idea is very widespread that the "history" of the four evangelists, after making due allowance for the times in which they lived and so on, is acceptable up to that sad moment when "they laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain." After that all is confused and confusing; the witnesses differ one with another; it is impossible to sort out fact from fancy—or fantasy.

Let us therefore set it down that no fact in the New Testament is better attested than the resurrection of Jesus. Of course if a man has decided to reject the gospels as historically valueless this narrative goes with the rest; but to regard them as satisfactory sources of history save and except when they relate the events immediately consequent upon the crucifixion is a purely arbitrary and entirely unscientific attitude.

"The resurrection is, to a historian, not very clear in its details. But is it the detail or the actual fact that matters? Take away the resurrection, however it happened, whatever it was, and the history of the Christian Church is unintelligible. . . . Great results have great causes. We have to find, somewhere or other, between the crucifixion and the first preaching of the disciples in Jerusalem,

[1] *The Meaning of the Resurrection*, p. 4.

something that entirely changed the character of that group of men. Something happened, so tremendous and so vital, that it changed not only the character of the movement and the men—but with them the whole history of the world." [1]

What was this fact which changed the history of the world? If we want to know we must try to see truth for ourselves and be utterly loyal to the truth we see. Second-hand uncertainties are no more comforting than second-hand certainties. We must put aside our prejudices or our assumptions, our speculations and our disquieting uncertainties, and go with open minds to the records themselves to see what significance, if any, they have for us.

[1] T. R. GLOVER, *The Jesus of History*, pp. 188-9.

II

THE EMPTY TOMB

THERE is no account of the actual resurrection of Christ. If, as some have alleged, the whole story is an imaginative effort, invented out of loyalty to a dead Master for purposes of propaganda, is it possible to believe that they calmly left their basic fact untold? The evangelists have not only omitted this primary incident; they have contented themselves with simply reporting the testimonies of various people concerning their experiences without attempting in any way to bring them into line one with another. No one saw the actual phenomenon of the resurrection and therefore there is no story of it. Their first fact is that the tomb was empty; the four evangelists and Paul[1] find their basic evidence in the vacant sepulchre where His body had been deposited some thirty-six hours previously. This was clearly regarded by the primitive Church as the principal guarantee for the resurrection of the Lord; and so it has been regarded ever since. This is the point at which, according to the gospels, the story took its rise.

It is a strange story; it is disconnected and confused; it is not easy to know quite what happened or to whom. But it will not do to dismiss this

[1] 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

allegation of the empty tomb as unnecessary to a belief in immortality or to a real faith in an ever-living Lord. If the story is untrue we are not likely to find in the dreams of such imaginative folk any firm foundation for a hope of eternal life. If it is a statement of literal fact, it has then a significance and a value which we must try to discover and estimate.

Let us see what the evangelists have been able to preserve and record of the story of that tremendous surprise which dumbfounded those who experienced it and was, according to the gospels, the dawn of a day of surprises which seemed incredible even to those most concerned.

(a) *Easter Eve.*

In their account of the entombment late in the afternoon of Good Friday the first three gospels say that some of the Galilean women noted the place where the body of Jesus was laid (Matt. xxvii. 61; Mark xv. 47, xvi. 1; Luke xxiii. 55, 56). Mark, supported by Luke's testimony which is apparently from another source, says that on Easter Eve—"when the sabbath was past"—the women went out and made certain purchases of unguents and spices. This is important because it supplies the reason for their expedition at daybreak.

The Lord's body had been granted by Pilate to Joseph of Arimathea. The fourth gospel associates Nicodemus with him in the arrangements for the deposition and burial. It was a matter of some haste, for there was but little time at their disposal between the death and sunset when the Sabbath rest

began. They wrapped the body in linen with about a hundred pounds' weight of myrrh and aloes, placed it in Joseph's rock tomb and closed the entrance with a stone.

The Jews did not use coffins for burial: the normal procedure was to anoint the corpse with nard or some other unguent, sprinkle it liberally with aromatic spices, and swathe it in linen wrappings with more spices in their folds. Apparently no unguents were used at the hurried interment of Jesus on the eve of the Sabbath; at any rate there is no mention of them. The tomb was Joseph's own: it was used because it was near at hand. Nothing is said which implies that this interment was other than a temporary expedient, occasioned by the nearness of the Sabbath; and the incomplete preparation of the body points in the same direction. It is clear that the Galilean women who watched the proceedings did not consider the obsequies complete and evidently had it in mind to "do those things which the women are wont to do for those that die and are beloved by them," as the apocryphal gospel of Peter puts it. That is the immediate reason for their observation of the place of entombment and for their purchases on Saturday evening after the Sabbath was over. It is probable that Matthew's confusion of these statements with those concerning Easter morning accounts for the ambiguous sentence at the beginning of his 28th chapter—"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn towards the first day of the week." It is not absolutely inaccurate, but it is confusing and tends to convey a wrong impression because it links

the business of buying " when the sabbath was past " (Mark xvi. 1) with the women's setting out at dawn (Mark xvi. 2).

Some critics seem to consider that the fact that the women were the first to spread the tidings of the empty tomb casts an air of uncertainty over the whole story. This is as ungenerous as it is unscientific. The story gives a perfectly satisfactory reason for the early visit of the women. Moreover, they were probably the only available members of the Lord's immediate circle of avowed followers. The disciples all " forsook him and fled " from Gethsemane. Only Peter and the " beloved disciple " [1] ventured to follow the prisoner to the high priest's house. Peter in his hour of shame and self-despair was probably being watched over by his friend John [1]—at any rate, he was in his company when the Magdalene sought for Him. To John, Jesus had committed the care of His mother, who would be in dire need of comfort and companionship after her agonising experience at Calvary. So the only people likely and available, and with a definite purpose, on Easter morning were these women.

(b) *The Women at Dawn.*

It has been asserted that there is a serious contradiction in the varying statements as to time in the gospels—" very early," " while it was yet dark," " when the sun was risen." There is certainly some

[1] This equation of " the beloved disciple " with " John," which we shall adopt for convenience, does not affect the story.

confusion here, but is it contradiction? "While it was yet dark" is apparently irreconcilable with "when the sun was risen." But it is not impossible that one narrator spoke of setting out in the dark, another of arriving at the tomb at sunrise. The twilight interval between darkness and light in the morning or in the evening is much less in Palestine than it is with us. "While it was yet dark" is the definite statement of the fourth evangelist who is not repeating the account of the general visit of the women in accordance with their prearranged plan, for that has already been made known in the earlier gospels; he is not concerned with the women but with the special experience of one of them—Mary of Magdala, whose name heads all the lists. Evidently the first three evangelists have simply reproduced the "conflation" of events on that bewildering morning with its totally unexpected experiences, as told by one and another of the party afterwards. The fourth evangelist deliberately confines himself to the experiences of Mary Magdalene, possibly because he knew more about them at first hand than he did of what the others had said, possibly because he was more intimately connected with those experiences.

His narrative shows her as the first to reach the tomb—which is not inconsistent with setting out in company; she may have drawn ahead unconsciously in her own eagerness. The fact that her name is always first may have just this significance. Mark says that Mary (the mother of James) and Salome were with her; but Matthew does not mention Salome. Luke (xxiv. 10) says "Mary Magdalene,

and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them"; this is probably a list of the women who, later, report to the assembled apostles.

As they drew near to the place they saw, to their surprise, that the stone which closed the sepulchre had been removed. The sepulchre was apparently empty and Mary Magdalene at once ran to inform Peter and John. The other women, Mary Jacobi and Salome, "entered in and found not the body of the Lord Jesus" (Luke xxiv. 3). Then, presumably, they returned to the company of the Galilean women to report this.

The first unexpected experience of Easter, then, is the finding of the empty tomb. The women had gone specially early. Climatic conditions made it desirable that the offices they purposed to discharge should be done as soon as possible; that would be one reason. Evidently they did not expect to find the sepulchre open; still less, to find that the body had been removed at so early an hour. "They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him." Possibly it was an understood thing that the use of Joseph's sepulchre was a temporary measure; possibly for that very reason they went early to the sepulchre with their unguents and spices, determined that all should be seemly and in order ere the body was taken to its final resting-place. They were surprised, but it is a natural surprise; it is because they had not anticipated the removal of the body before daybreak. They might think that Joseph had caused the removal;

that he or Nicodemus had heard of some hostile intention of interfering with the sepulchre and had thought it politic to forestall the activities of the priestly party. What had happened had been without their knowledge and contrary to their expectation. There is not the slightest suggestion that the women set out in any spirit of expectancy or excitement; or that their first feelings were other than unpleasant surprise and disappointment. Someone had interfered and removed the Lord's body.

"We know not where they have laid him." So Mary is reported to have said to Peter. But for that "we" John's account might have suggested that she had been alone. As it stands, it is evidently a reference to the same experience of the women at dawn that is reported by the other evangelists.

(c) *The Visit of Peter and John.*

The fourth gospel is our only authority for any detailed account of the report of Mary to the two apostles and for their visit to the tomb; but some confirmation is afforded by the brief reference in Luke: "Peter arose, and ran unto the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths by themselves" (xxiv. 12).

John says that at Mary's tidings—evidently unexpected by them—they at once hastened to the sepulchre, the "other disciple"—we shall continue to call him John—outrunning Peter and arriving first at the tomb. By this time it would certainly be broad day. Stooping down and looking in at the open door he saw the linen cloths "lying." "Lying"

is not the superfluous word that it seems to be in the English translation. It has the place of emphasis in the original sentence. It is repeated at each mention in vv. 5, 6 and 7; it is preserved in Luke's brief reference (xxiv. 12). What is its significance? Why is it thus stressed and repeated? There was evidently something unexpected not only in the presence of the wrappings but in their disposition; the writer has used a word that expresses the idea of the wrappings extended and in position just as they would have been were the body still within their folds.

The presence of the linen cloths is itself an arresting fact. Surely if the body had been removed, whether by friends or enemies, the wrappings would not have been discarded. But the grave-cloths are not only in the tomb; they are in the actual position and folds in which they would have been if the body were still within them—they were not just a heap of discarded wrappings.

Peter pushed past his comrade and entered the tomb. His attention is at once caught by " the linen cloths lying "; he reports to his comrade another significant thing that perhaps was not in sight from the line of the doorway; the head-band was not with the rest of the linen but " rolled up " in a place by itself. " Rolled up " implies that the napkin still retained the shape given to it by the head round which it had been wound. It was " by itself," for one end of the ledge cut to receive a corpse was left an inch or so higher to support the head. John then entered " and he saw, and believed."

What was it that John saw?

The women had seen that the sepulchre was open and empty; the men were startled by the fact that whilst the Lord's body was no longer there the linen cloths in which it had been swathed remained. The body had been taken from the cross, wrapped in linen winding-sheets some eight feet long with some hundred pounds of powdered spices about it and in the folds of the linen. Why should any persons removing the body have needlessly complicated their task by discarding the cerements? Stranger still, those linen cloths were lying as though they had not been touched since they were swathed round the body; as if the body had been " de-materialised " out of them without in any way disturbing their position.

The men departed " wondering." That is Luke's word and it fits the occasion. The tidings that the body had been removed at so early an hour, without their knowledge, was a matter calling for prompt investigation, perhaps for an immediate interview with Joseph, the owner of the tomb. But " the linen cloths lying " there—that is what they saw; and they went quietly away. Mary supposed that the body had been transferred elsewhere by the gardener or at the instance of the authorities the tomb had been rifled. If their inspection had simply confirmed this view then surely they would have gone at once to Joseph, whose official position would enable them to obtain redress—unless, indeed, he was in a position to explain what had happened.

Peter " wondered " and, wondering, went to his lodging: John " saw and believed." That is how, many years later, he interprets the awe and wonder

that the sight of those "linen cloths lying" inspired. He is telling of a significant fact that stamped itself upon his heart; intuitively he is convinced that something of tremendous significance is implied. From that moment he dates his conviction that the Lord had arisen. This personal note is of interest only as a record of experience. No part of the fourth gospel better supports the belief that its writer was himself an eyewitness, or the amanuensis of an eyewitness, than these last two chapters. The detailed narrative, the admirable brevity and reserve, the consistency, the little touches that give indications of what was passing in the observer's mind; little particulars that do not seem in themselves significant, such as a man is prone to mention when telling of some eventful thing in which he has had a part because he is mentally recalling the picture stamped upon his mind.

Look for a moment at the literal significance of the phrases he has employed in the few verses of this narrative. In v. 5 he writes of "stooping to examine," of what he "sees with his eyes," of "the linen cloths lying." In v. 6 he speaks of Peter "*viewing* [this different word implies mental discernment] the linen cloths lying." In v. 7 "Not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up"—or "turbaned"—"in a place by itself." In v. 8, he "marked," or "took note of"; he "believed"—a conviction of a fact to be rested in, as of fundamental import. The examination and weighing of fact, the care in wording his statement, is all highly suggestive of first-hand reminiscence.

"So the disciples went away again unto their own home." There is no sign of a predisposition on the part of these disciples to expect anything marvellous; they are in no hurry to "jump to a conclusion"; nor do they appear to have hastened to consult with others. They went home to think it over, to "wonder."

> "It was not a bare fact of which they were to be convinced. It was a fact of infinite spiritual significance which could only be appropriated by active and willing minds." [1]

Human minds need time to make a truth their own; they cannot be bludgeoned into faith. Peter and John saw Jesus later in the day; then they were ready to realise, instead of being stunned and stupefied by surprise. In this gradual unfolding of truth we see the disciples under the sympathetic guidance of the teacher who had said to them, "I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now."

(d) *The Return of the Women.*

Meanwhile the tidings of the empty tomb brought by Mary Jacobi and Salome caused a larger body of the Galilean women, including Joanna (cf. Luke xxiv. 10), to visit the sepulchre. As soon as they entered the tomb they saw two persons clad in white. Mark says "a young man"; Matthew, "an angel"; Luke has "two men"; John, "two angels." From the varying numbers we may reasonably conclude

[1] W. R. Maltby, D.D., *The Meaning of the Resurrection*, p. 9.

that there were two visitants to the tomb and that one of them spoke to the women. Those of the women who were actually within the tomb saw the men; the others heard the speaker; and their accounts varied accordingly.

There does not seem any sufficient reason for supposing that these visitants belonged to a supernatural order of beings. This does not discredit the testimony of the evangelists; we must recognise that the mentality of the first century differs from that of today. There is a parallel in the story of Peter's escape from Herod when his friends, incredulous of Rhoda's announcement, said, "It is his angel" (Acts xii. 15). There was a tendency to think in terms of angels and so to see them. In that story, and probably in this account, a man was taken for an angel. Possibly, as Latham suggested, they were two priests—their office prescribed white garments—who were of the uncounted adherents of Jesus.

The speaker asked the women why they sought the Living One among the dead and invited them to "behold the place where they laid him" (Mark xvi. 6). Here again is a confirmation of the story told in John; what was there to consider save the significance of those "linen cloths lying"? Had he already interpreted it for himself? Finally he bade the women tell the disciples "He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you" (Mark xvi. 7; Matt. xxviii. 7; but compare v. 10. Compare also Luke xxiv. 6). "As he said"—for this we must turn to Mark xiv. 28. They were on the way to Gethsemane. After the arrest "a certain young

man followed with him, having a linen cloth cast about him" who escaped when the soldiers tried to arrest him also (Mark xiv. 51). Is it merely a coincidence that here is a young man in linen who may well have heard the reference to Galilee, and that Mark's speaker is "a young man arrayed in a white robe"?

> "And they went out and fled trembling from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid" (Mark xvi. 8).
>
> "And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word" (Matt. xxviii. 8).
>
> ". . . they were affrighted and bowed down their faces to the earth. . . . And returned from the tomb, and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest" (Luke xxiv. 5, 9).

These three conclusions to the story are not merely inconsistent, but contradictory. The note of fear is in each one. Matthew's "ran to bring his disciples word" followed, as it is, by a sudden manifestation of Jesus, is probably a confused reference to the appearance to Mary, as related by John. Mark's sentence is unfinished. All reflect the confusion and bewilderment of the women. But between "they said nothing to anyone" and "they told all these things" is absolute contradiction.

Matthew's account, whilst it is obviously based on Mark, adds several things that are unsupported by

other testimony save the rather ominous similarity of passages in apocryphal gospels. The purposeless earthquake and the angel who opened the tomb sound like echoes of the type of pious speculation which is beginning to obscure the facts. The story of a Roman guard bribed by Jewish officials to confess a serious infraction of military discipline is a tax indeed on one's credulity. It is probably an echo of the early controversy; the followers of Jesus assert that the tomb was empty; the Sadducees retort that the disciples themselves conveyed away the Lord's body; then in reply comes the story of the bribed guards. In vv. 9, 10, Jesus appears, merely to repeat the injunction to tell the disciples which has already been given by the "angel." As we have said, this is probably a confused echo of the story of the appearance to Mary.

The only light we gain from Matthew is a bit of indirect evidence that the story of the empty tomb was early and widely circulated; and that assertions of the secret removal of the body, and counter-assertions of the bribing of the sentries were flung about.

When the mists gather even the prominent features of a landscape may take on an unreal appearance, but reality is still there; we are viewing it through a distorting medium. The mist of legend which we feel in Matthew's account does not discredit the reality of his central fact.

The records of those earliest hours of Easter do assert that the tomb was found empty, save for the shrouds in which the body had been swathed, and that a person or persons asserted that Jesus was risen.

(e) *Was the Tomb Empty?*

The four evangelists agree in the testimony they give that the tomb was vacant when the women visited it at dawn; they agree that this was a complete surprise to the women and that it seemed quite incredible to the disciples when reported to them; they agree that someone in white spoke to the women of Jesus as "risen," and that in a manner which implied knowledge of former conversation between Jesus and His friends.

John tells us that he and Peter visited the empty tomb and were impressed by the fact that the shroud was left in place, and the head-cloth, too, lay as if the body had been removed without causing any disturbance of its wrappings; a sentence in Luke is confirmatory of this, though the information is not repeated in full; the invitation of the visitant in white suggests that some tokens, linen cloths or other, still indicate the place where He lay.

The accounts show minor discrepancies and variations, as is to be expected when several persons' accounts of an entirely unexpected happening are set down independently; whether the women went at once to spread the tidings or delayed through fear to tell the story is a point on which there is contradictory evidence. The number of men in white (or angels) need not necessarily involve any discrepancy.

All four are agreed. It is well to keep in mind that they are not witnesses in the box; but merely people writing down for the benefit of interested folk, who have the same belief, a record of how the

facts came to them. It is either true, or else we have to account for some brilliant imaginative writing on a subject outside the range of ordinary human experience. Mr Middleton Murry[1] says that the fact of the empty tomb is quite definitely doubtful to him. As he is a man of literary judgement and experience, it would be interesting to know if he finds in literature of that age anything comparable, as a literary *tour de force* with, say, John xx. 1-11.

In Matthew's story we see how legendary details, of the imaginative order to be expected in that age, begin to creep in. But we may not pass over the fact upon which all are agreed because of minor variations and remain impartial. Rejection of the history on which all are agreed is not justifiable on the ground that we have rejected points of a minor nature on which the stories do not show complete agreement.

There are, of course, orthodox Christians and sceptics who are at one in saying that this matter of the empty tomb is not of very great importance. Canon Selwyn[2] says that the empty tomb presents to the mind one of those issues where a decision is made "at a deeper level of personality than that which is concerned with weighing historical evidence." Mr Murry, in the article just referred to, says that the orthodox Christian has no need of the arguments to enforce a conclusion which he has already accepted and that for the sceptic they are no arguments at all. But surely the proper function of human intelligence

[1] *The Week-end Review*, 30th March 1930, pp. 100-101.
[2] *Essays: Catholic and Critical*, pp. 281-319.

is to make sure of fact, and then to follow loyally wherever that fact may lead. There is no other way to reality.

In the main, criticism has recognised that to treat the gospels as good sources of history only up to the resurrection stories is both arbitrary and unscientific. Hostile criticism has therefore sought to explain how the tomb came to be empty. The first hostile explanation was that the disciples stole the body. Christianity then becomes the most colossal fraud ever perpetrated in human history and, when we consider all the consequences of Christianity, we may well despair of all attempts at moral or spiritual progress if some of the most hopeful of human achievements in these directions are merely the result of fraud. Matthew's account of the currency of this story, without any supporting evidence, is simply the evidence of the bankruptcy of all attempts on the part of the Jews to gain a footing for any other suggestion.

The alternative explanation is that the Jewish or Roman authorities removed the body. In this connection we may quote Canon Streeter's summary of the position:[1]

> "The discovery of the empty tomb, assuming the story to rest on adequate evidence, which I personally believe to be the case, is often supposed to determine the decision in favour of the traditional theory. This, however, is not really so, for with a little ingenuity it is not difficult to imagine more

[1] *Foundations*, p. 134.

than one set of circumstances which might account on purely natural grounds for the tomb being found empty."

Canon Streeter then suggests as a sample of possible explanations, that the Roman authorities might have removed the body with a view to preventing a nationalist rising. He continues:

> " Of course, neither this nor any other one definite suggestion has any claim to be regarded as in itself particularly probable, but where a natural explanation of the event is at all possible there must be very special reasons for falling back upon an explanation of a supernatural character."

This seems to mean: the evidence is quite good, and there is no evidence for any " naturalistic " explanation: the fact evidenced, however, is so extraordinary that we must assume there is an explanation if only we could find it.

Canon Streeter's own acute historic sense finds the evidence for the fact adequate. His sympathy for those whose judgement does not go with his own impels him to a purely imaginary hypothesis for which there is no evidence at all. On behalf of all such he says, in effect, that the evidence is historically good but it is incredible to our intelligence; therefore let us set it aside and imagine something easier.

Mr Middleton Murry[1] is willing to grant for the sake of argument that the tomb was empty and explains it as Canon Streeter suggests. This is cer-

[1] *Op. cit.*

tainly a step in advance of the childish argument that the disciples went to the wrong grave by mistake—as if Joseph of Arimathea had bought Lot No. 67892 in a modern cemetery and they had confused the identity-ticket! Or the more foolish argument that the friends of Jesus agreed in His name to invent a marvellous tale after secretly removing the body—a story that would surely have leaked out before long. Of course, if the removal had been arranged by those hostile to Jesus we have to explain why they did not produce the body a few weeks later when they were using every possible means, including murder, to stamp out the spreading fire of this new faith. The production of the corpse would have silenced the Christian preachers more effectively than any persecution. Mr Murry says that there may have been no remains; that the body may have been burned with the bodies of other malefactors. But surely in that case some persons responsible for the desecration of the tomb and for the subsequent cremation could have been put forward to testify and state the facts. Most strenuous efforts were admittedly made to suppress belief in the allegations of the followers of Jesus when, if Canon Streeter's or Mr Murry's hypothesis had any foundation in fact, it would have been quite easy to establish their falsity.

Every man is entitled to judge for himself about this empty tomb; but before we accept his judgement we have a right to be assured that he has patiently and perseveringly tried to test the strands of which the narrative is woven. Had they all been identical

in colour, quality, and material we might suspect collusion. It is some support for the trustworthiness of the Gospel story as a whole that it is so different in its method from any work of imagination. Suppose that no such experience as the gospels allege befell the disciples on Easter morning, and that it was all an attempt made by friends of Jesus to immortalise His memory by inventing a marvel so transcendent that it had never hitherto entered the mind of any man. Surely, first of all, the stage would have been consciously set for the display of so tremendous a theme. Matthew's account gives us a suggestion of what would have been done. We can understand earthquakes and angels embroidered by simple minds upon the original story; but we cannot account for the stark simplicity of that original story. It is never staged at all. It is as simple, as unexpected, as divine, as the story of the Babe born into humblest human circumstance with which the Gospel begins.

The story of the empty tomb is without a parallel. Mr Murry says that to prove the occurrence of a fact without a parallel we need infinitely more evidence than the historian needs for a probability.[1] But Jesus Himself is without a parallel. And Mr Murry tells us he accepts the fact of Jesus. Again we must remind ourselves that the evangelists were stating a fact; they were not concerned with bringing evidence to prove it. The rest of the New Testament is occupied with the consequences of that fact. It is concerned with the doings of men whose conception of their vocation was that they were primarily

[1] *Op. cit.*

witnesses to the resurrection; of their own knowledge, He who was dead was now alive. This was the foundation on which everything else rested. It is the centre round which the whole New Testament story revolves.

The disaster of the cross had been complete and unexpected. It could only have been reversed by some event of as momentous and unexpected a character. Thirty-six hours after His death and burial tidings reached His disciples that His tomb was empty, then that He was no longer dead. This rumour was at first regarded by them as incredible; as we examine the records further we shall find that for them it was incredibly confirmed. His followers became convinced that He was not dead but alive, convinced with a certainty that did not admit of question and a certainty that was communicable to others on a scale it is not easy to compute. They were assured He was more potently alive than before. He had not merely survived the attack of His enemies; He had met it to the full and had triumphed not only over them but over the death they had inflicted.

Mr Murry in the article to which we have referred above says: "It is humanly certain that something did happen." He recognises that subsequent events have to be accounted for. He says it is not argument at all to deduce that these subsequent events were only possible because of the physical resurrection of Jesus. We do not know how Mr Murry proposes to account for those events; all that the New Testament says is that they did proceed directly as a sequence from that experience of the first Easter morning, and

it traces the sequence for a time, not in arguments but in a record of experiences. They never said that any of the phenomena they record were " only possible because of the physical resurrection of Jesus." Indeed, their method, and their language, is more direct, and their logic more accurate, than that.

Latham's summing-up still stands unaffected by much that has been written since:

> " That the body of our Lord did actually disappear from the tomb is a well-supported fact; it was the interest of many to recover it, and why any should have hidden it has not been explained. No trace of it was ever found." [1]

For all who believe in God as revealed by Jesus Christ there is some assurance of the historic truth of the story in the gradual way its tremendous message is unfolded. That is so entirely in keeping with the whole spirit and method of Jesus. Immortality is being brought to light; an immortality that transcends all human thought or experience. This revelation is not for a few initiate mystics but for the whole human race. Its witnesses, therefore, must be " ordinary " men, men of like passions with ourselves, men whom we can understand, in whose place we can put ourselves without the need of any special equipment of intellect or temperament. First there comes the stimulus of the unexpected to a small company of women—to people whose hearts are heavy by reason of the disaster that has overwhelmed their hopes. They are wondering how they will

[1] *The Risen Master*, p. 23.

gain access to the tomb, and find to their surprise that it is open. Then they are perplexed by the disappearance of the body—He has been taken away, they suppose. The fulfilment of the purpose of their visit is delayed for the moment; they must report and get the men to look into it.

The two disciples who respond to Mary's summons find "the linen cloths lying there," and the significance of the cerements that do not seem to have been in any way disturbed sets them thinking. The two men are Peter and John—two of the three to whom Jesus gave that mysterious charge as they returned from the Mount of Transfiguration, "that they should tell no man what things they had seen save when the Son of man should have risen from the dead. And they kept the saying, questioning among themselves what the rising again from the dead should mean" (Mark ix. 9, 10). Two men who had thus been prepared by their own questionings for this very experience make the discovery of the "linen cloths lying there." Events begin to relate themselves one to another in their minds and to take shape and significance.

Before we pass to the next stages of the Resurrection story let us make a note of Professor Harnack's verdict on the story of the empty tomb:

> "This grave was the birth of the indestructible belief that death is vanquished, and that there is a life eternal." [1]

If that verdict is true, something adequate to the

[1] *What is Christianity?*, p. 161.

tremendous result—which Harnack characterises as "an indestructible belief"—must have happened there. An indestructible belief requires an indestructible foundation if words are to have a meaning: it is difficult to understand how a disciplined mind can propose to accept the belief and at the same time to reject the evidence, or to regard it as a matter of minor importance.

"Professor J. B. Bury has urged that history is a science: the object at least of every science, however its methods may differ from those of other sciences, is to learn, to interpret and to explain. The historian cannot like the lawyer cross-examine his witnesses, nor like the man of science use test-tube and reagent, but his purpose is the same. Like the Greek of old he wishes to know and he wishes to understand. In history as in science there is no democracy among facts; all, it is true, have the same right to be understood, but some facts are of vastly more significance than others. The scholar for whom all facts are of significance and all of equal significance never understands anything, though Nature is kind to him and conceals from him that there is anything to understand. Conversely, I have heard genius described as the instinct for the fact with meaning, for the real factor; and it is this that every true historian and every real man of science will seek."[1]

[1] T. R. Glover, *Christ in the Ancient World*, p. 2.

III

THE APPEARANCES ON EASTER DAY

In this chapter and the next much use will be made of the fourth gospel. It will be well to keep in mind Dr Headlam's opinion that these narratives "imply very great imaginative art if they are not based on historical reminiscences."[1]

(a) "*First to Mary Magdalene.*"

There had been no time for the traditional lamentation at that hasty entombment on the Friday evening, so when Mary returned after reporting to Peter and John she "was standing without at the tomb, weeping." She "knew not where they had laid him," and the only outlet for her grief was to bewail the dead where His body had been.

When she stooped and looked into the tomb the visitants in white were there. If we have read the story aright, this was Mary's first knowledge of their presence. They asked why she wept and she answered:

> "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him."
>
> "When she had thus said, she turned herself

[1] See *Miracles in the New Testament*, p. 254.

back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away."

"I know not where they have laid him." So she had reported to Peter and John; so she had answered the men in white; so now to the supposed gardener. She was "Mary out of whom seven devils were cast." In more modern phrase she had formerly suffered severe mental derangement. Cured of this by Jesus, she had become one of the band of ministering women. She had endured the horror and anguish of the scenes on Calvary, the desolation of a Sabbath of sorrow, the shock and bewilderment of the empty tomb; now her spirit was vainly beating its wings in the imprisoning cage of that one thought: "I know not where they have laid him." It was becoming a fixed idea. That way madness lies.

"First to Mary Magdalene." Whilst the sorrowful Mother, the friends at Bethany, the little, broken society of loyal souls, are still in the darkness? Love can wait; it can endure all things: but need such as Mary's cannot. "He saith unto her, Mary." At once she knew that it was Jesus. Peace returned to the distracted mind.

Let us recall the Gospel portrait of that Person so unique in the annals of mankind. Is this the same Person? The Healer, the Saviour is the Healer and the Saviour still. He called her to herself—Mary.

That is the first step in all mental or spiritual healing. Then He called her to Himself—"Do not cling to Me." He had not come back to be as He used to be. Contacts from now were to be unbreakable by any Power of time or space. It was the first indication that the old intimacy was to be exchanged for a higher fellowship. To Mary for the moment He was "Rabboni" as of old: He withdrew a pace, and the truth began to dawn that He belonged to a new order, a new world.

Finally He gave Mary her task; she was to be the messenger of life and immortality brought to light to their friends who sat in darkness. It was a "purpose in life," to complete her restoration.

"I have seen the Lord," she told the disciples. What did she mean?

That the body whence all supposed life had departed had been laid in the tomb and in its coolness and quiet, aided by the strong aromatic odours of the spices, had recovered consciousness? That she had found Him just outside the sepulchre, having managed to struggle to the open air despite His shattered state? There is no suggestion of womanly instincts aroused to minister to a stricken sufferer snatched from the very jaws of death. She had supposed him to be the gardener: only when He spoke her name did she realise that it was Jesus. He had "appeared." Whence? She could not tell. Where had He gone? She did not know. It was all a mystery; but of one thing she was sure—she had seen the Lord.

If there is any meaning in Mary's story, *resurrection* is something quite other than resuscitation.

(b) "*Unto Cephas.*"

From two references it may be inferred that the second manifestation of the Risen Lord was to Peter. The assembled disciples on the evening of Easter day told the two from Emmaus, "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon" (Luke xxiv. 34). Paul in his recapitulation of the evidence says, "that he appeared unto Cephas" (1 Cor. xv. 5). There is no other record of this second appearance. It was made to a man weighed down by the bitter memory of his denial. Next to Mary, Peter was the one in greatest need of his Master's ministry. It is understandable that Peter had but little to say about it. It is also significant that relief came to this overburdened soul so speedily—significant of the thoughtfulness that speaks of Jesus.

(c) *The Road to Emmaus.*

This story is only found in a section of Luke's gospel which has many individual characteristics and peculiarities of style. An actual narrative noted down by one of the two disciples whilst the experience was fresh in their minds would read like this. In the opening sentence of his gospel Luke says that such manuscript notes had been of special interest to him as a compiler. The section may, in fact, be a substantial incorporation of the oldest known Christian document in his text with a minimum of editorial alteration. As a story it is historical, sincere and unartificial; its whole tone suggests that it was a

memorandum made before the tremendous import of the resurrection was realised.

The identification of Cleopas with Clopas—and therefore with Alphæus—has been suggested and rejected: but Dr J. H. Moulton gave ground for questioning that rejection.[1] If the conjecture is justified it is not unreasonable to assume that Cleopas' companion was his wife, Mary, who had been one of the early visitants to the empty tomb: she was the most likely person to be returning with her husband to the house at Emmaus.

These disciples were two very matter-of-fact people. Evidently they had left Jerusalem before Mary Magdalene had reported her encounter with the supposed gardener. Their story is that as they walked they discussed "all these things that had happened," and were joined by another traveller who asked what was the subject of their talk. Cleopas expressed surprise that anyone from Jerusalem should be unaware of the topic that was upon all men's lips and told Him that they were discussing the crucifixion of Jesus of Nazareth. He described Him as "a prophet mighty in word and deed" on whom they and others had centred their Messianic hope. He spoke as one who had now quite abandoned that hope. His companion added that it was the third day since the crucifixion, and that some of the women of their company had been to the tomb that morning and had seen an "appearance" of angels who said that He was alive. Cleopas said that some of the men had

[1] *See* his *Grammar*, vol. ii, and the Moulton-Milligan *Vocabulary*.

then gone and found the tomb empty, as the women had said, but saw nothing. Evidently he thought that the women's vision was a mistake or a delusion.

This was the first report of the Easter tidings, made by people with sad faces, disappointed hopes and perplexed hearts. We may at least say there is nothing in it to suggest any spirit of expectancy, or of a ready credulity for the marvellous.

The stranger ignored their morning experiences and challenged their acceptance of the current notions of the Messiah on the ground that the prophetic literature gave a very different picture of Jehovah's servant. The warmth and clarity of His exposition of Old Testament references to the Suffering Servant awoke an answering warmth in their hearts. Absorbed in discussion they found themselves at Emmaus and when they halted outside their home He appeared to be going further. He yielded, however, to their pressing invitation to take supper with them. Such was their sense of His spiritual authority that they committed to Him the blessing and the breaking of the loaf. And " he was known to them in the breaking of the bread."

> " Their eyes were opened and they knew him, and he vanished out of their sight."

The time was at least an hour before sunset, for by " evening " they had returned to Jerusalem (John xx. 19). They were sure that He had " vanished "—that is their word for His disappearance. Nothing is said of attempting to find Him either about the house or on the road.

> "They rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered together, and them that were with them, saying, The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon."

That word "indeed" is significant; behind it lie the reports, doubts, discussions and arguments of the company during the day.

The two from Emmaus "rehearsed the things that happened" to them. They ascribed their non-recognition of Jesus to something in themselves—"their eyes were holden"—only so can they account for their failure to recognise Him. In the general excitement over Peter's news their story seems to have aroused little or no comment.

The appearance to Mary was of a Person whose character was in perfect accord with the character of Jesus of Nazareth: this "stranger" on the Emmaus road reveals the same personality. The familiar "questionary" method of Jesus marks and shapes the tenor of the conversation; it is typical of the way in which He explored the minds and hearts of the disciples and stimulated them to mental activity. Consider His easy influence and natural ascendancy over the two, though at first they supposed Him to be a man very much out of touch with recent events: note His disappointment at the slowness of their perception of the Divine purpose. Every characteristic is faithful to the portrait of Jesus in the gospels.

Here also, as in Mary's experience, the full revelation of Himself is not made at once; their eyes and hearts are slowly but surely opened, and when at last He

"is known to them in the breaking of the bread" it is just the crystallised certainty of a conviction which has all the time been taking shape in their minds, though they have not been aware of it.

Mary had supposed Him to be the gardener; Cleopas and his companion had supposed Him a stranger. Admissions like these would hardly have been made by people who were anticipating a miraculous happening. Still less are they what one would expect to find in imaginative writing by men of that time. In this whole narrative until we reach the word "vanished" there is no hint of anything unusual. The touch of prodigy is lacking, and that touch would surely have been irresistible to men deliberately composing a marvellous tale. To make "each particular hair to stand on end" is the normal instinct of such writers. Instead, they tell us tamely that they did not know it was Jesus until in some way He made Himself known to them. He was seen and recognised only as and when He willed. When He so willed, they were quite sure it was Jesus.

What, then, have we learned of this Person who "rose again from the dead"? Nothing, so far, that was not already implicit in the recorded teaching of Jesus. If these stories of an empty tomb and of appearances to His friends are literal, historical fact, they are evidence of the truth of Jesus's doctrine of Man. They are evidence that the true "man," the self, is Soul; and that Soul is lord of matter and can mould it to its will. He who enabled a paralytic to regain control of his useless limbs, who restored to the lunatic complete self-possession, who reawakened

the pulseless body of a little girl to consciousness and life, had a like authority and control over the flesh in which He dwelt among men. After His final triumph it was subject completely to His will; it was the obedient instrument of His self-expression, and no longer mere clogging matter by which the Soul is subjected to those conditions of time and space under which we, perforce, conceive all self-manifestation.

Is this adventuring far from the solid basis of fact and experience into realms where all is too vague to carry much meaning or authority for us? The medical practitioner who makes use of hypnotism can show that by the power of the hypnotised subject's mind over his body a rash or blister mentally suggested becomes visibly and actually present in his flesh; or, again, that on a contrary suggestion it is no longer there. This is a trivial thing, but imagine the same control on a more far-reaching scale: let it be the perfect control of Matter by Spirit. Would not the "mystery" of the empty tomb, or the "mystery" of the appearances cease to be mysterious? Suppose that in the resurrection of Christ from the dead we have a truly historical account of such a perfect control exhibited in its most perfect form: exhibited, not as a curious experiment, nor as a demonstration of superiority, but for a great purpose—for conveying the truth of Reality, of Life and Immortality; and that to folk who have no abstract nouns, who have to be taught, step by step, to realise that the Idea is greater than the Thing it causes. Could teaching more perfect, more adequate, have been given?

(d) *The Evening of Easter.*

Luke xxiv. 36-43; John xx. 19-23.

The disciples were together, the doors being shut "for fear of the Jews"; Cleopas and his companion had told their story; and

> "he himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be with you." They "were terrified and affrighted; and supposed that they beheld a spirit."

They were frightened at what they thought was a ghost. Terror paralyses men's minds and it was at once dealt with in a practical fashion.

> "See my hands and feet, that it is I myself; handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold me having."

Their fear became awe. "They disbelieved for joy" is Luke's perfect description. This thing was true, but it was too good to be true. Jesus brought the situation to a prosaic and homely level.

> "Have ye anything to eat? And they gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it, and did eat before them."

Here, we are told, is a definite insistence on corporeality. For some minds that is a sufficient reason for regarding it as unhistorical ("Luke," they say, "loves a good miracle"). One writer says "the whole conception is at variance with Paul's idea of the Resurrection body."[1] But is it? Paul and Luke,

[1] *See later*, pp. 74-76.

if we accept the New Testament history, were very intimate friends; it is at least probable that on so vital a matter as the resurrection they knew each other's minds. We may be fairly sure that Luke was aware of the implications of what he was writing. Here was testimony that the risen body was one with the body that had suffered on the cross; that it was visible and tangible; that the wound-prints were there; that He ate food in their presence. Taking food does not imply dependence upon it. Was not this, from the point of view of those incredulous disciples, the best of assurances that He was not a mere phantasm—"that it is I myself"?

> "Once cross the boundary of the present sphere of existence, and we are in a realm where we can no longer say, 'this is impossible.'"[1]

Equally significant is the evidence that the disciples were impressed by the contrast between Jesus of Nazareth and this Risen Lord as well as by their identity. Indeed, the differences were so great that they were with difficulty persuaded of the identity of the two. He passed where doors were shut; He appeared and disappeared; there was no "coming," no "going"; there was something non-recognisable about Him. He was "in another form"; it was not simply the former body resuscitated, but it was a body adapted to a mode of existence not hitherto contemplated. A "body" with such powers and possibilities as the stories describe cannot be said to be merely "corporeal," or indeed to be a human

[1] E. R. Bernard.

"body" in the sense in which the term is ordinarily understood.

> "The disciples therefore were glad, when they saw the Lord. Jesus therefore said to them *again*, Peace be unto you."

This note of joy, so prevalent in the New Testament writings, is one of the real, if unintentional, evidences of the resurrection. To the reassured and expectant company of His followers the Lord gave the commission recorded in John xx. 21-23. Consideration of that is outside our present purpose, but the characteristic method of Jesus is noteworthy: "he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost." They would not know what He meant, but the seed-thought had been sown, and "when the day of Pentecost was fully come" they would be prepared to understand.

Thus ends the record of the first Easter. An empty tomb; the significance of the linen cloths that lay there, empty, yet undisturbed; men in white apparel who declared this to be the fulfilment of His word and reminded the disciples of the tryst in Galilee; Mary's appeal for help to One whom she only recognised when He spoke her name; reports given to one and another, discussed, debated, doubted by some; two disciples with whom He walked and talked, who recognised Him in the breaking of the bread, and from whom He thereupon vanished; a gathering of disciples in the evening, excited because the Lord was indeed risen and had appeared to Peter.

Finally, the Lord Himself appeared in their midst, they had been terror-stricken, but He had allayed their fears and given them homely assurances of His veritable self.

On each occasion something is left to the intelligence of the disciples and to their joy of discovery. This is in perfect accord with the teaching method of Jesus as recorded in the gospels.

Of the reality of Jesus, alive and triumphant, these experiences gave the disciples an unshakable assurance. The one reality which gives continuity with the world beyond is personality (cf. Matt. xxii. 32).

> "It is personality with which we are concerned, the whole personality which has discovered its true self and its abiding reality in the fellowship of man and of God, and is the home of all that is of value to Him." [1]

So the certainty grew, and the Word, "in another form," tabernacled among men.

[1] J. E. C. Welldon, *Life after Death*, p. 50.

IV

THE LATER APPEARANCES

(e) *A Week after Easter.*

LUKE wrote of "the eleven" gathered together on Easter evening (xxiv. 33); according to John this was an inaccuracy, for Thomas was not with the rest.

We know very little about Thomas, but that little is worth recalling as a help to a better understanding of this story. When Jesus heard in Peræa of the illness of Lazarus and decided to go to the dangerous neighbourhood of Bethany, Thomas said, "Let us also go that we may die with him" (John xi. 16). It was the word of a loyal man but not a very sanguine soul. With the rest he had been present at the raising of Lazarus. He had seen the physical body resuscitated for the return of its tenanting spirit, and such an experience would have some influence on his ideas as to what a "rising from the dead" would mean.

We hear of him again during the conversation after the Last Supper. When Jesus said, "Whither I go ye know the way," Thomas was perturbed and uneasy at the suggestion of parting. "Lord," said he, "we know not whither thou goest; how know we the way?" (John xiv. 5). It is the interruption of a plain, simple man stirred out of his normal quiet at the hint of separation from Jesus; a prosaic man; slow to speak; a typical loyalist.

After the appearance on Easter evening the others told Thomas, "We have seen the Lord." His refusal to believe is not a mere outburst of incredulity doggedly persisted in; it is the despair of a man bereaved of the one passion of his life. He mourned for his Master and refused to be comforted. Moreover, there was plenty of folk-lore about ghosts in those days, and their views about possession by spirits, good and bad, covered a wide range of possibilities. Thomas was not to be cajoled from his grief by any necromantic fancies.

"Doubting Thomas" is a description that may convey more of the idea of disbelief than is justified by the facts. He refused to make the certainty of others a substitute for his personal conviction; those others respected his attitude and, as the sequel makes clear, it did not alienate him from the fellowship. The men who knew him probably realised that loyalty to Jesus was the root of his apparent stubbornness. That loyalty was part of Thomas's very self; it did not stand or fall with his acceptance or rejection of other people's assertion that they had actually seen Jesus.

Ultimately the question between Thomas and the rest had become one of personal identity. His final reply is, "Except I see . . . put my finger into the print of the nails." Ill-equipped as we are at this day to deal with some of the problems involved in this very matter of personal identity[1] we cannot be

[1] Compare the difficulties of Spiritualists in meeting the objection that their phenomena are largely, if not wholly, the product of their own subconscious activities.

surprised if they found the subject too difficult to handle so as to satisfy Thomas. Earlier that same day they had all disbelieved the women—their words had seemed to them but as idle talk; and they would recognise that Thomas was only showing an incredulity akin to their own.

On the following Sunday, the disciples were again together, behind closed doors, and Thomas was one of the company. Again the Lord appeared and stood in the midst. After the familiar salutation He turned to Thomas, bidding him make those very tests which he had said he would require. The Lord, then, had known all that had gone on when they had talked with no thought of Him as in their midst. The idea of the presence unrealised by physical senses gains a footing. So it might seem to some of them. But Thomas? He is convinced; not because of the wound-prints, but because there was only One who so perfectly understood him, read his very thoughts, and was ever ready to help little faith to greater.

Thomas had proposed to identify Jesus by the corroboration of the sense of touch agreeing with the sense of sight and hearing; he actually identified, not the mere body, but the very Self of the Master (cf. John xx. 28). It is not irrelevant to note that the exhortation, "Be not faithless, but believing," does not convey any rebuke. It might be paraphrased, "Do not remain in uncertainty."

Thomas's position appears to have been that either the appearance was a trick of the imagination or else the Lord had actually reassumed that body which had been so stricken on the cross—just as Lazarus had

stepped reanimate from his tomb. Neither of these alternatives fitted all the facts concerning the Lord's resurrection. Thomas recognised this when the reality of personal experience became his. His words —the words of a Jew who will not lightly name the Ineffable Name—express the most profound and absolute conviction, "My Lord, and my God."

> "The worst enemy that faith has to face is that utter blank and paralysing silence which death interposes, and a man can scarcely be said to have a God at all until he is a God who puts a new meaning into the fact of death, and fills the life before and the life after death alike with the light of His presence."[1]

Jesus turned Thomas's thoughts to introspection by His question, "Is it because you have seen you have believed?" and so enabled him to realise that he had achieved certainty by evidence other than that of his physical senses. It is characteristic of the method of Jesus with His disciples.

Thomas is an example for all men of the only way to real attainment of certainty about the resurrection. It is not proof that is wanting. It is a vital realisation that is needed, and a quiet and confident entry into the simple and final testimony. The New Testament evidence is adapted supremely to that end. When the Risen Lord appeared, more than outward visibility was needed for complete recognition. As with Mary, and the two at Emmaus, so with Thomas.

[1] W. R. MALTBY, *The Meaning of the Resurrection*, p. 8.

Some personal characteristic or token convinced them that it was the Lord.

> "The world is infinitely the richer owing to this uncertainty which passed through Thomas's mind. Each generation reads the history and puts itself in Thomas's place; each has its own uncertainties, and is apt to insist on setting up its own criteria. Here they see how the Lord dealt with a situation like their own." [1]

(f) *At the Sea of Tiberias.*

John wrote an appendix-chapter, after originally closing his gospel at xx. 31, for the purpose of adding an account of the manifestation on the shore of the Lake of Galilee. He gives a picture of apostles waiting in Galilee, possibly in obedience to the message brought by the women on Easter morning, but there is no note of time to confirm or contradict such a supposition.

His story is that a party of seven of them, five of whom are named and a sixth spoken of as the beloved disciple, went for a night's fishing on the lake. At daybreak someone called to them from the shore, "Lads, have ye aught to eat?" They answered, "No"; for their fishing had been without success. He then bade them cast on the right side and find, and they did so. The beloved disciple then said to Peter, "Simon, it's the Master!" Whereupon Peter plunged overboard and made for the shore whilst his companions brought the catch to land. The story evidently comes from a fisherman, for he notes that it was remarkable that the

[1] LATHAM, *The Risen Master*, p. 195.

net withstood the strain of the great haul they had made. And he has a fisherman's memory for the fact that they took a hundred and fifty-three fish. Such expeditions were on a sharing basis, and he would have good reason for remembering the figure of so good a haul.

A meal was ready for them on the beach, and Jesus bade them partake, breaking and giving to them the bread and fish. They knew it was the Lord, yet could not trust their knowledge; they longed to inquire, yet dared not. The phrases give us a glimpse of the inward conflicts, the hidden processes, which resulted in the resurrection-faith of the apostles. Was it in the breaking of the bread, as at Emmaus, that they were one and all sure of His identity? It is at this point in his narrative that the writer notes:

> "This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples after that he was risen from the dead" (John xxi. 14).

The study of the Resurrection stories enables one to understand how the "breaking of the bread" became so essential a feature of early Christian worship. Obedience to the injunction given at the Last Supper, "Do this in remembrance of me," was so manifestly a means to the experience of the Real Presence of the Lord. John's phrase, "the third time" seems to refer to appearances experienced by a company of disciples, as distinct from individuals. That does not imply that he rejects as untrustworthy the appearances to individuals, for he gives the only account of the appearance to Mary.

After the morning meal came the well-known conversation between Jesus and Peter, so characteristic of the manner in which the Master had dealt with Peter's education on former occasions. A very "evidential" detail is the parabolic use made of Peter's resumption of his fisherman's coat, which had been drying in the sun during the meal. As he did so Jesus said to him:

> "When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest; but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not."

Of a commonplace incident a picture was made that would stay in Peter's mind all his days. It is not the sort of detail that would be invented for an imaginary story, any more than the implied non-recognition of the Lord by His apostles in the earlier stage of the meeting. Characteristic of Jesus, too, is the forethought of the Master for hungry men who have spent the night in fruitless toil.

(g) *The Galilee Tryst.*

Matt. xxviii. 16-20 is a brief account of the keeping of the tryst in Galilee at "the mountain where Jesus had appointed them" (cf. Mark xiv. 28). Some worshipped, "but some doubted": it is suggested that this phrase may be Matthew's echo of the story of Thomas. It is more likely that disciples other than the eleven were present, some of whom were slow to credit the evidence of their senses. With the greater part of the apostolic company the Risen Lord had

already met twice or thrice. Probably this was the manifestation to "above five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain until now," included in Paul's summary (1 Cor. xv. 6). Matthew's account includes a commission to the disciples in which the authentic words of Jesus appear to have been combined with later church formulas.

Paul's statement about the five hundred brethren cannot be set aside as unsupported testimony merely because we have no other certain reference to it. Its corroboration is that no adverse testimony was provoked by his challenge when he said that many of them were available as witnesses when he wrote, and he was writing to a people who were not in sympathy with the idea of resurrection. His challenge is in the earliest of our documentary references to the resurrection; it is of pre-gospel date. Paul says "five hundred brethren *at once*." This makes any theory of a subjective phenomenon very precarious, for "collective hallucination" on such a scale is outside human experience.

Mark records the message to the apostles to meet the Lord in Galilee; Matthew also. Luke makes quite another use of the reference to Galilee (xxiv. 6), and apparently knows nothing of appearances there. It has been urged that there is a serious discrepancy between our sources as to whether the manifestations took place in Jerusalem or Galilee and that, in face of the injunction to go to Galilee, Jerusalem appearances were at the least improbable.

Of course, if the evangelists were concocting a story they ought to have avoided such an obvious

dilemma—just as Luke ought not to have given the impression of a continuous narrative, which might be taken to mean that the events he relates happened on Easter day, culminating in the Ascension after an evening walk to Bethany. We know from the Acts that Luke did not intend to give any such impression.

What the story as a whole tells us is that Jesus promised to meet His friends in Galilee; that the women brought them a reminder of that promise from the men in white; that the women's story seemed to the disciples idle talk; that they were slowly but surely convinced by the Lord's appearances in Jerusalem itself; and that the Lord did meet with them in Galilee, by the lake-side and on the " mountain."

(h) *The Ascension.*

For this final manifestation Luke is the only authority. He refers to it in summary at the close of his gospel (xxiv. 50-53) and gives a fuller account in the first chapter of the Acts (vv. 6-11), prefaced by a general statement that the Lord " shewed himself alive after his passion by many proofs, appearing unto them by the space of forty days, and speaking the things concerning the kingdom of God."

This general summary of the six weeks following the resurrection implies that we should not consider the recorded appearances as an exhaustive list, but rather as specimen instances of the intercourse between the Master and His people during that time. In the " many proofs " it may be taken that Luke includes appearances and conversations in which the Lord expounded from the Scriptures " the things concerning himself,"

gave instructions for their immediate conduct, and commissioned them for their future work in which He assured them of His continued presence and fellowship.

At the end of the " forty days " He

> " led them out till they were over against Bethany (*Acts*, the mount called Olivet) and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while he blessed them (*Acts*, as they were looking) he parted from them, and was carried up into heaven."

This last clause is doubtful, being omitted by some ancient authorities. The account in Acts says " he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight." It goes on to say that after this departure the disciples became aware of " two men in white apparel " who assure the " men of Galilee "—the inference is that they were themselves Judæans—of His coming " in like manner as ye behold him going."

Why these men were not mentioned in the account at the end of Luke's gospel is not easy to explain; unless we assume that he is giving in Acts a second story of the Ascension derived from another witness. It is easy to picture two cultured Judæans (priests, in their white apparel) among the adherents of Jesus explaining things somewhat condescendingly to the provincials; but it is not so easy to understand the off-hand way in which they speak of " this Jesus," or the assurance with which they speak of a local return " in like manner." Perhaps in accordance with accepted canons for writing history in his day Luke is making up the speech for them and presenting the general view and expectation of the age. The

prediction has not been made good. The matter is an aside, so far as our present study is concerned.

Any inquiry into the mode of the Ascension must be purely speculative. The disciples lost sight of Him in the cloud resting at that hour on Olivet, and they felt that it was the end of these intermittent experiences of His presence which they apprehended by their physical senses. The psychology of the effects of the fact of the resurrection upon the disciples is a secondary consideration; the first business is the fact itself.

Many a remark in His conversations with them, many little tokens of His forethought for them, many a familiar gesture—a host of little, unrecorded things, so small in themselves, so great in their sum, had brought them during the forty days to the realisation that, whether they saw Him or no, whether His actual voice fell on their ears or only the "sound of a gentle stillness," He was always near, always understanding, always guiding. "Lo, I am with you all the days" was the epitome of their certainty.

"They returned to Jerusalem with great joy." The last lesson for which the Master had need to appeal to their physical senses had been learned. Olivet had "no sadness of farewell," for He was with them all the days. This was the last and greatest lesson to be given. His method was the same as ever, a little light shown in the darkness; then, as the eyes of their minds opened to it, more light. And more. Until they knew. The lesson that His death was needed to impart—"I have many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now"—has been given. They can be guided into all truth.

V

THE PROCLAMATION OF THE RESURRECTION

THE reader will not need to be reminded that the resurrection of Jesus was proclaimed for many years before it was recorded. The records which we have been examining were made in consequence of the growth of the new religion which followed that proclamation. Any impartial attempt to assess the value of the evangelic testimony must remember that it is simply a preservation in writing of the alleged facts by which this religion was propagated. History, as Quintilian said, is written to tell a story, not to make out a case. Due weight must be given to the fact that these stories are concerned with something unique in human experience; something as unique as the personality of Him whose words and acts the evangelists recorded. This does not put the event outside the ordinary rules for assessing the value of testimony but it does require that the problems raised by that uniqueness shall be taken into consideration.

They testify, first of all, that to the surprise of all concerned His tomb was found empty on Easter morning. On this point each of the four gospels is a document to be put in as evidence. Only a very determined scepticism can doubt that the empty tomb is the definite fact on which they all base their evidence for the resurrection.

They report that when the fact of the empty tomb was first known any "supernatural" explanation seemed to them as idle talk. For some considerable time they did not realise what it implied; and when faced with its logical consequences they were not able at first either to realise or accept them. That realisation and acceptance had to grow.

As many modern writers point out, it is much easier to believe in a kind of general immortality which includes the Risen Lord and ourselves, but the witnesses were not to be beguiled from their loyalty to fact into taking a course that was easier to follow.

Most "explanations" of the way in which the resurrection-idea arose and grew quietly pass over the fact that the first allegation is that the tomb was empty. It is not good historical criticism to take the first three gospels and assume that their historical value ends with the crucifixion. If the testimony to the fact of the empty tomb is unhistorical, who shall make clear what is reliable history of past events? The modified unbelief of today—which is almost orthodoxy—says that the evidence for the resurrection is at the least precarious, and that it is easier and safer to be satisfied with the vital truth that the Lord triumphed over death and is alive for evermore. One is reminded of the only essential demanded by Archimedes in his famous saying—Give me a fulcrum and I will move the world. Where is the fulcrum for this Christianity which has moved the world? To be satisfied with a "vital truth" which has no solid basis in ascertained fact is not likely to be a permanent condition of mankind.

For those earliest evangelists and their converts that cenotaph was the great pledge that death had indeed been conquered; among them were surely many men of intelligence and reasoning power sufficient to test the evidence; among the opponents of this new sect were certainly men in a position to demonstrate the truth or falsity of the position. There the function of reason and intelligence ceases; science affords no known parallel for such an occurrence, and when we talk about the sublimation or etherealisation of matter we are using words that are simply symbols of our ignorance. The Christian faith claims that when God in Christ became incarnate, physical evolution reached its highest point of conquest over material conditions and through the victory over death passed over into forms of energy of which we can have no knowledge until we share a like experience.

> "Into the mystery of that mode of being only the heart of the worshipper can penetrate; and its only language when it does so is that of S. Thomas, 'My Lord and my God.'" [1]

The second theme of the evangelic testimony is that the Risen Lord manifested Himself repeatedly to His friends. If we possessed the complete gospel of Mark it is probable that on this point also there would be a fourfold testimony; before his narrative breaks off with its unfinished sentence it is asserted quite definitely not merely that the tomb was empty but that Christ was risen. As it is, we have sundry stories of appearances, more or less independent, in

[1] SELWYN, *Essays: Catholic and Critical.*

Matthew, Luke and John. To arrange these stories into a definite sequence is impossible; to harmonise them with one another seems almost as impossible. Probably if they could be so harmonised it would be argued that they all sprang from one source! The alleged differences are largely due to the fact that the several writers give accounts of different manifestations. Where there are discrepancies they are in details not of first importance, and all support the substantial truth of Luke's brief summary—He shewed Himself alive after His passion by many proofs.

Explanations which make the appearances purely a question of apostolic psychology fail to account for the curious fact that they persisted for about seven weeks, *and then ceased.* Nor is it clear on any such explanations how they affected not simply individuals, like Mary, Peter and James, but groups of people—the two on the road to Emmaus, the ten in the room of meeting, the eleven, the seven at the lake-side, Paul's "five hundred brethren." Nor is it clear how men who dismissed the earliest reports as "idle talk" came to be convinced.

The facts given do, however, make it difficult to believe that we are dealing with cases of normal perception; the mysterious exits and entrances; the significant fact that these manifestations were only to the men whose minds had been trained by Jesus, and for them were supremely vocational in their effect. It may be said that the evidence certifies us of nothing more than the fact that the Lord appeared to His disciples and gave them a clear call to work. Do the stories, then, merely amount to this—that the disciples

saw visions of their Master after His crucifixion and inferred that He had risen from the dead? Were the experiences entirely the result of the disciples' mental condition? Or were they caused by Christ Himself, really present among them?

> "Did Jesus shew himself their risen Lord after his death and burial? We cannot understand the history of the early Church unless this be admitted."[1]

The belief that He did so was universal in that early Church.

> "It was clearly looked upon as the fundamental fact on which the Christian message is based and as the ground of the Christian hope."[2]

(a) *The Early Teaching.*

The matter that was of cardinal importance in the evangelism of the first days was that Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified and was now raised from the dead (cp. Acts ii. 24; iii. 14 f.; iv. 10 ff.; v. 30, etc.). The evangelists were convinced of this, and were able to convince others. The apostles claimed to have had personal experience of the facts and deemed it to be their primary function to be witnesses of His resurrection (Acts i. 22). In all the early speeches of the Acts Peter "proves" the Messiahship of Jesus by asserting His resurrection and every noteworthy speech in the book has as its final clinching argument, "this Jesus did God raise up whereof we all are witnesses." True, in these days we should use an impersonal

[1] W. E. Barnes.
[2] Headlam, *Miracles of the New Testament*, p. 244.

paragraph where Luke, like other ancient historians, has no hesitation in inserting a speech in the first person. It is a different conception of the way in which to write history; but it represents faithfully the general tenor of early Christian teaching.

This testimony was the chief cause of conflict between the disciples of Jesus and the leaders of Judaism (cp. Acts iv. 2–4; v. 28-30). The disciples were so sure of their ground that they made their proclamation in the most challenging form conceivable:

> "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, hanging him on a tree."

To see what this meant as an expression of their conviction and how complete was their readiness to stake all upon it, we may recall the controversy between Justin Martyr and the Jew Trypho. Trypho agreed that the idea of a suffering Messiah was found in the Old Testament prophecies, but argued that it was unthinkable that Messiah should be crucified. The Law was quite explicit; "Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree;"[1] and nothing could make Trypho believe that Messiah would come under the curse of God. The first Christians were Jews who knew their Scriptures and proclaimed the Crucified as Messiah and Lord.

Why had their whole religious outlook undergone so revolutionary a change? Not because of their fellowship with the "historic" Jesus; when the shadow of the cross fell upon them their faith was shattered. Not because He suffered and died; how

[1] Gal. iii. 13, quoted from Deut. xxi. 23.

they felt about that is clearly shewn in the conversation on the Emmaus road. It was because they knew that Jesus was raised up from the grave, as they asserted on every occasion. Because of that they were convinced that He was the Christ of God; at first, in spite of His sufferings, and later, because of them also.

Every effect must have an adequate cause; surely this applies to the march of history as well as to physical phenomena. Look at the historic nucleus of the Christian Church; Peter, John, Andrew, Philip, the Galilean women—a handful of good-hearted, simple folk. Were these the people to recover from the shock and disintegration of their leader's trial and shameful execution, and in their recovery to generate by any means of self-deception whatsoever, so tremendous a force for transforming the story of mankind? The evidence of history is that they did so transform the story of their age and, in ever more universal sweep, the story of the ages that have followed. Something changed those people from a broken company of peasants into a world-moving force; faith in the risen Lord has exercised a more profound influence on human history than any other force which the world has known.

Take away the resurrection, and it is impossible to account for the preaching of the Gospel. Accept the story, and there is at once adequate cause for the outstanding phenomenon of human history—the rise and spread of Christianity.

The burden of their preaching is that God had raised up the crucified Lord. This had changed them from a broken company of disappointed men, meeting

behind closed doors for fear of the Jews, into fearless evangelists whose boldness caused all men to marvel. To them, at any rate, their faith must have been a great reality. A man cannot lift others on to the rock unless his own feet are firmly planted there.

The strength of the earliest Christians was in their certainty; the fire of an intense conviction made their testimony irresistible. What was that certainty? That Jesus died, was buried, and was raised again from the dead. No one denied the first two propositions; it was the third that was the spear-head of their message. God had raised Him, they said; and

> "we cannot but speak the things which we have both seen and heard."

The note sounded at the outset of the story of apostolic activity is echoed on almost every page of the New Testament from Acts to Revelation: "the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"; "whom God raised up"; "died and lived again"; "God . . . who brought again from the dead the great shepherd . . . even Jesus"; "who was dead and is alive for evermore." There are many like phrases which make it indisputable that the Christian society arose on the basic faith that Jesus Christ rose again from the dead. Here is one very real, historical evidence of the resurrection—it was believed, preached, propagated, and produced as its fruit the Christian Church before any gospel was written: all rested upon the facts of the empty grave and the appearances of the risen Lord.

The alternative, as Dr Headlam has pointed out, is

that people thought the tomb was empty when in fact it was not; that they thought they saw Him alive after His passion when in fact they did not: and that these two blunders combined to produce the Christian Church.

(b) *The Testimony of Paul.*

The classical passage from Paul's letters from which we can conveniently begin a consideration of what it meant to him is 1 Cor. xv. 1-8. There are, as we have said above, numerous references in almost all his letters which either state or take it for granted that Christ had really died but was now alive again. Most of these references are not argumentative but simply references to the resurrection as a historical fact which was a matter of common knowledge to the circle to which the writer and his correspondents belonged. In the letter to the Corinthians, however, he is addressing a community in which this consensus has to some extent broken down. With great warmth he asks, "How say some among you that there is no resurrection of the dead?" and declares that if Christ has not been raised their faith is vain (vv. 12, 17). Finally, he ironically says that the evident adoption by some of them of the Cyrenaic maxim, Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die, is justified "if the dead are not raised" (v. 32).

Paul begins with a précis of the facts which is in the form of a primitive creed; that Christ died; that He was buried; that He hath been raised; that He appeared. These facts have already attained theological and credal significance; "for our sins," "according

to the scriptures," "that which I also received." "So we preach, and so ye believed" (v. 11). The letter is written before any of our gospels in their present form; it refers back to his preaching in Corinth some six years previously. "I make known to you"—not as a new disclosure, but as a recapitulation of the faith he had then delivered to them. It was, he says, the faith which he had received; the faith of which he, a bitter opponent of Christianity, had become convinced within a year or two of the resurrection.

The essential facts are stated in their essential order; died, was buried, hath been raised. The rising was relative to the grave; therefore it is a definite "bodily" resurrection, not simply the vague continuation of the existence of the "spirit." This point is essential to the argument which he develops in vv. 35-54. The analogy of the sowing of the seed presupposes that the grave is the state from which the resurrection took place. Dead, buried, rose; it is a *motif* which has been wrought into the mind of Paul; again and again he employs it.

> "God . . . when we were dead through our trespasses, quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. ii. 5 f.); "Present yourselves unto God, as alive from the dead" (Rom. vi. 13); "We were buried therefore with him through baptism unto death" (Rom. vi. 4); "Having been buried with him in baptism, wherein ye were also raised with him . . . you, being dead through your trespasses . . . did he raise" (Col. ii. 12, 13); "Crucified . . . I live" (Gal. ii. 20).

It would be easy to multiply examples, but these suffice to reveal something of the tremendous impression made upon Paul by the inescapable facts at the time of his tremendous spiritual struggle which resulted in his conversion to Christianity.

The summary emphasises " the third day " and we have only to turn to the opening verse of the next chapter of this same epistle to find a reference to the " first day of the week." The primitive Church, even in Jerusalem where they kept the Sabbath, added the observance of the first day of the week: this startling innovation was due to association with the resurrection, and to nothing else. The letter is evidence that this was well-established custom before the four evangelists had produced the gospels from which our evidence is mainly drawn.

The death, the tomb, the empty tomb, the appearance to Peter, two appearances to the apostles are all stories preserved in the Gospel and confirmed in this earlier credal summary. So, in all likelihood is the manifestation in Galilee recorded by Matthew.[1] An addition is the appearance to James, of which we have no record in the Gospel. Paul also includes his own experience on the road to Damascus as in some respects—his phrasing suggests distinction no less than identity—on the same plane of importance. For him, as for the rest of the apostles, it was of supreme vocational significance that the Risen Lord appeared to him and called him. Psychologists have considered this an evident case of a vision caused by the struggle to suppress his unacknowledged reaction to Christ,

[1] *V. supra*, p. 58.

the reaction breaking its way into consciousness in vision. Such visions, they allege, are frequently to be met with as vehicles of an ignored, or suppressed, reality of consciousness. But his inclusion does not warrant our saying that he regarded his experience as of equal value as evidence. Jesus had appeared to him, and, despite the psychologists one feels that Paul's own conviction was that He was not simply a disembodied spirit; what He was more it may be impossible to put into words; the present writer certainly feels inadequate to the task. Paul's whole theology seems to imply that he, at any rate, was sure that something more than a vocational vision was involved in his great experience.

The purpose of this great chapter was not, of course, to prove Christ's resurrection, but to prove *ours*, the proof being based upon the *acknowledged fact* of Christ's resurrection. That fact is asserted, the catechetical evidence recited; but its general acceptance by the Corinthians is taken for granted, any cavillers being reminded that there are plenty of living witnesses.

The resurrection, then, was a primary article of the faith of Christian converts—even on Greek soil, in an intellectual atmosphere where the very idea seemed ridiculous (Acts xvii. 32), though the Platonic concept of immortality was familiar. The New Testament says nothing on the philosophic problems of the soul's immortality. There is, for example, no trace of the arguments of the *Phædo* in Paul's epistles. That the soul should be born again to live on earth in another body is irreconcilable with Paul's conception of the incorruptible or " spiritual " body.

It has been said that the corporeality of the appearances alleged in the gospels is definitely at variance with Paul's view of immortality.[1] We may not assume (as Canon Streeter appears to do [2]) that Paul regards the parallel between Christ's resurrection and that of the Christian as complete in all respects; but it is quite important to recognise the difference between the Platonic and the Pauline views of immortality. Though "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God" yet Paul is sure there must be a "body" in that life.

Paul's idea is summed up in the crucial phrase, "There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body." His actual words, here translated "natural" and "spiritual," are "psychical" and "pneumatical." Unfortunately, all four terms, whether the familiar version or the transliterated Greek words, are apt to mislead because they are used so loosely today, and in such varying connotations.

Aristotle speaks of the "psyche" of plants, by which he means what we should call the "life" or "vital principle." This is distinct from the "body" of the plant. Paul recognises with Aristotle this "body" as the seat of the physical form and the "psyche" as the seat of life, or sense. To these he adds the "pneuma" (usually translated "spirit"), which is the spiritual faculty by which man apprehends God.

Or we may put it that the "psychical" body is Paul's way of denoting the organ of the personality

[1] *V. supra*, p. 47.

[2] *See* his essay in *Foundations*.

adapted for manifestation of the self under earth conditions; whilst the "pneumatical" (or "spiritual") body is his term for the organ and instrument by which the personality (or, the Soul, or, the Self) manifests itself under supra-terrestrial conditions. Of course we have no experience of those conditions because we only know the conditions of earth life: and equally of course we do not know what the "pneumatical" body of those other than earth conditions may be.

Perhaps the idea that Luke's account of the appearance on Easter evening is at variance with Paul's teaching is due to the gratuitous supposition that these two "bodies" are necessarily in radical contrast to each other. Paul's whole argument is that they are *in essence* identical. His illustration for it is the relation of the seed to the plant. His idea of the "spiritual" body is not that it is less material than the "natural" body, but that in the "spiritual" body matter is completely controlled by spirit and not by the exigencies of physical life. It is a "body" which has become the perfect instrument of the Indweller and is adequate to all his purposes.

We are apt to talk so loosely about "disembodied spirits" when we merely mean spirits freed from the fleshly integuments we wear and that we can resolve into their common chemical constituents that we overlook what we mean by "Self." The only "self" we know is a self constituted of body as well as soul. Paul's triumphant expression of the Christian hope is not one of deliverance from the body but of the redemption of the body; so all through this great

argument he uses the word "body" in a sense other than "flesh." When he speaks of the "flesh" he uses another word altogether.

A quarter of a century ago Sir Oliver Lodge[1] pointed out that for all who are "in the body" there is no evidence for the existence of spiritual activity except by the manifestation of that activity through matter. God is spirit, we say, and the material universe in which we live is evidence of His activity. Sir Oliver concludes that this universal dependence of the spiritual on some vehicle for self-manifestation

> "is probably a sign or sample of something which has an eternal significance, a representation of an eternal truth."

If this is a false conclusion all our present experience of manifesting of ourselves one to another is needlessly misleading. If it is a true conclusion,

> "What is wanted to make definite our thoughts of what we call our immortal part is simply the persistent power of manifesting itself to friends, i.e., to persons with whom we are in sympathy, by means as plain and substantial in that order of existence as the body was here. . . . We may surmise that any immortal part must have the power of constructing for itself a suitable vehicle of manifestation, which is the essential meaning of the term 'body.'"

This is a very different vocabulary from that used by Paul, but the underlying thought is not so very far different. For Paul,

[1] *Hibbert Journal*, January 1906, pp. 318 ff.

> " the resurrection of Jesus was a test case, and like every test case, it fixed a principle." [1]

But whilst it fixed the principle, it was to be expected that a body unstained by sin would not be left to corruption (cf. Rom. i. 4); or, in more modern language, the physical resurrection of Jesus was the natural sequel of the uniqueness of His life.

[1] H. R. MACKINTOSH, *Immortality and the Future*, p. 178.

VI

THE FACTS AND THEIR MEANING

In his essay on the Resurrection[1] Canon Streeter says:

> "It *may* be that the old interpretation of the facts is right, and no one, I imagine, would abandon it without a pang, hallowed as it is by old association and venerable tradition. But it can only be sustained, if at all, after a complex analysis of difficult philosophical presuppositions and after difficult and delicate discussions, critical and historical, which the plain man cannot follow and where the experts are not agreed."

It is not quite clear what is meant by "the old interpretation," but it is quite clear that Canon Streeter does not offer much encouragement to anyone desirous of sustaining it, whatever it may be.

The barriers, philosophical, critical, and the like, if they do truly exist, will have to be honestly faced; for no man's heritage of faith can become his own faith until he has appropriated it, just as one must appropriate—make one's own—any other heritage. "The faith thou hast, have it thyself" is not a suggestion; it is an imperative. No man *can* rely on a belief imposed on him by others, however excellent their intentions, however willing his reception. For

[1] *Foundations*, p. 140.

no man truly *believes* until the belief has significance for him.

If time-honoured and traditional interpretations are no longer tenable it is vain to try to hold on to them; the anchor will drag and we shall be adrift on the uncharted sea. The pangs of abandonment must be endured: after all, such an abandonment will only be obedience to the injunction, "Let the dead bury their dead."

What do we mean by the venerable traditional interpretation? The article of the Apostles' Creed, "I believe . . . in the resurrection of the body," had, until quite recent times, a meaning for the ordinary man to which we cannot intellectually assent today. Men believed, to put it quite crudely, that after death there would be a long period of "sleep" until a final and literal Day of Judgement. When that day arrived the former physical body would be reconstituted so as to make the entire man exactly as he was before death.

A great hymn-writer of the eighteenth century could, with perfect sincerity, paraphrase the famous verse, Job xix. 26, and say:

> In this identic body I
> With eyes of flesh refined, restored,
> Shall see that self-same Saviour nigh.

Or again, and more explicitly:

> In this re-animated clay
> I surely shall behold him near.

Wesley did not know that "in my flesh" was a mistranslation; nor did he know of that continuous breaking-down and building-up of the mortal "clay"

which is an elementary commonplace of our physiological primers. The most rudimentary knowledge of organic chemistry will suffice to compel us to dismiss, with or without pangs, that venerable tradition of the first eighteen centuries.

Probably this venerable resurrection belief was influenced by the historical accounts of Christ's resurrection; undoubtedly the interpretation of the stories of Christ's resurrection was influenced by the "material" conception of the life beyond.

"The third day he rose again from the dead" does not mean the same thing as "the resurrection of the flesh," which was quite definitely asserted in the Old Roman Creed. Paul explicitly condemned this as "foolish" because a body of flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God (cf. 1 Cor. xv. 36). Explicitly he asserted that the spirit will have a "body"—an organ of self-expression and activity. His analogy for this, as we have already noticed, was the seed-sowing. "The naked grain" he says is what man sows; God gives it a body, "and to each its own body"—a body appropriate to itself. So, he argues, we shall have a body fitted to the purposes and conditions of the future as the physical body we now know is fitted to the present conditions. Paul does not say that the process is the same; he does not say that it is parallel; but he does say that the two processes are analogous. This present life, lived in corruptible flesh, is the sowing-time (cf. Gal. vi. 7 f.), the germinal state concluding with physical death out of which the "body of immortality" will spring.

Christ's physical body, according to the faith of the early Church, saw no corruption (cf. Acts ii. 31; xiii. 34 f., etc.), but its mortal element was "absorbed by life," to use Paul's own phrase (2 Cor. v. 4), without leaving any fleshly element behind to suffer corruption.

It is frequently suggested that Jesus manifested Himself for the sake of convincing the disciples of the reality of His resurrection and of His complete triumph over death and the grave: and that this manifestation was not with the physical body raised out of the tomb but "in the manner obscurely suggested by various psychical experiences recorded in later times."[1] It has been said that the disciples could not have regarded the soul as immortal apart from the body. Why not? The Old Testament story of the appearance of Saul at Endor whilst his body was in the grave seems to imply that the existence of visible disembodied spirits was not beyond the mentality of that much earlier age. Further, Paul's testimony cannot be so easily passed over; he certainly had a mind! And he held and expounded a very definite doctrine of a future state, not contenting himself with the simpler Platonic doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

If we are to think clearly and sincerely we must have a historic basis for the Christian faith and for the Christian experience. Faith in its essence may be something which transcends history, but it must in the first instance be rooted in actual events and in the experiences which those events created. The resurrection of Jesus was not only an actual event, it was

[1] Dr C. J. Cadoux, *Expository Times*, xxxiv, pp. 504 ff.

an epoch-making event; it is one of those tremendous forces which are demonstrated by their revolutionising effect upon the world's thought and activity. The evidence for it comes through the medium of recorded history; it may have been tinged with some local colouring in the retrospect of authors and eyewitnesses but it is the substantial fact that matters. The evidence may be perplexing, sometimes confused, incomplete in details, but the main facts do stand out unavoidable.

The purpose of the resurrection evidence was to demonstrate that it was indeed "this same Jesus"; and only His friends could be quite sure of that. By the evidence they received they were gradually prepared for the withdrawal of His visible presence so that the abiding Real Presence might be assured to them.

As narrated by His friends the resurrection of Jesus was neither a return to the normal conditions of earthly existence nor the appearance of a ghost—though it so nearly resembled the latter that it was at first mistaken for it. But they were finally convinced that the risen Lord was not unsubstantial; that whilst He had the characteristics of a spirit He also still possessed "bodily" characteristics and was what Paul described as a "spiritual" body.

Then the resurrection of Jesus was a *new* thing. Are we to suppose that the disciples invented or imagined this new thing? They make it quite clear in their testimony that they saw Jesus after His passion in human form on this earth; walking, sitting, giving Himself to be touched and handled, speaking, even eating with them; that they were convinced that He was not a mere "spirit."

People who generalise about the growth of legends and suggest that all these things are details added to the original story must define with reasonable clarity what was the original story, and begin where the narratives themselves all begin. They must also bear in mind the early date and the evidential value of the testimony of Paul, the great antagonist of the new sect, converted to the faith within a year or so of the resurrection. We have seen how the conviction of it shaped and coloured all his thinking and fixed his concept of Reality.

The disciples felt that Jesus was "different" and yet the same. They have noted the little mannerisms which are so revealing of individuality. His love, knowledge and understanding of His friends was the same; the same great themes marked His conversation. His treatment of men was characteristic; He healed sore hearts, illuminated the ignorant and made their hearts glow with assurance, directed the destiny of His own, revealed the same love for man, and the same passion to perfect those He loved; He made His presence a living reality to them.

Call this self-manifestation a "spiritual body" if you will; Paul's authority is behind the word. But let us mean by it no less than he predicates. It is a body so completely subservient to the purposes of that spiritual personality that its functioning is conditioned solely by that personality. It is its organ of self-expression; a "body" that is a means of taking and using dominion over the natural universe, all things having been put under his feet. It had been "sown in weakness," for the old natural conditions

had mastered it; " raised in power," for it had finally mastered them. First that which is natural, afterward that which is spiritual.

Such a manifestation was made to the disciples during the forty days. Aquinas called it " a resurrection in glory." The risen Lord came and went as He willed, absolutely: He changed at will from the unrecognisable to the recognisable, from the visible to the invisible. This was the " spiritual " body; a body of which the " spirit " had complete control. Locality, tangibility, corporeality, visibility—all were at His will. He regulated His actions according to the needs of those with whom He was dealing and by His knowledge of their discussions at times when they had no thought of His presence revealed that " in between " the appearances of which they were aware He was " with them."

The Lord had not come back to the old manner of life at all. It was the manifestation of " newness of life." Paul called it a " Body of Glory "; but Paul could not explain what a Body of Glory meant, except that it was the same Jesus clothed with new splendour. Far from implying that the empty tomb counted for nothing, he sought to convey by the word " body " that there was an essential connection between the Body of Humiliation and the Body of Glory.

His self-manifestations were in perfect harmony with the Lord's own teaching concerning the Kingdom of Heaven and man's victorious destiny. The resurrection is triumph over disease, for all disease is a kind of dying; it is the triumph of spirit over matter, for a dead body is just part of the inorganic world. In

complete sympathy with His earlier miracles, it sets before man eternal life as Reality. God in the Risen Christ "had abolished death and brought life and immortality to light." Easter was final evidence that the subordination of matter to spirit does not end with the body as we know it. There is something more perfect than we have yet experienced in bodily organisation; a more spiritual and lasting type of "body" in touch with a finer and nobler environment.

> "The time may come when Matter will no longer offer any obstacle to our wishes. . . . There is nothing philosophically absurd in the supposition that a will completely at one with the Divine Will must needs have a complete control of the Material."[1]

Professor Cairns[2] finds that this is in perfect agreement with the principles of evolution. He takes as his illustration the difference between a monkey's paw and an artist's hand, pointing out that the difference is not merely anatomical or physiological: the hand of the artist is a better instrument of expression for the indwelling spirit. As we follow the trend of the evolutionary process we see the bodily elements becoming more and more instruments of the spirit, more and more adequate for the uses of intelligence, imagination and soul.

The Easter faith rested upon a number of lines of convergent testimony and declares that something happened to Jesus as the essential climax of His human life and death. He did not merely *survive* death; He conquered death. The resurrection was more than the

[1] F. C. C. Schiller. [2] See *The Faith that Rebels.*

rising from the dead of Christ's physical body; it was an act of God who raised Him: it was the ultimate reconciliation of "spirit" and "matter"—an act on a level with creation.

Science in her findings draws nearer to this doctrine day by day. Old theories of the indestructibility of matter become meaningless as men seek to penetrate the mystery of the atom. Matter, we are learning to say, is simply energy. When the physical, or natural, body that was laid in the tomb was resumed by the regnant spirit the energy of which it was formed passed into the other realm and left no residuum behind. The essence of the body remained the same; the mode of its existence was changed.

> "In that glorified body the penetration of matter by spirit was so complete that he could at will re-enter into terrestrial conditions and become perceptible to the senses of human beings on earth."[1]

The resurrection was more than a confirmation of the doctrine of the continuity of life; it was a demonstration that a newer and more adequate mode of existence awaits those released from merely physical means of self-manifestation. It was not a repetition in Christ's own person of the lesson which the author of the fourth gospel saw in the raising of Lazarus: that would have given no pledge of a new and glorified Life Beyond and the veil between the seen and the unseen would have remained. This Paul clearly recognised (cf. 2 Cor. iii. 7–18).

[1] Dr Sparrow Simpson, *The Resurrection and Modern Thought*, p. 418.

In this "evidential" aspect the purpose of the resurrection was rather to complete the education of the men who were to "turn the world upside down" than to convince outsiders or to confound opponents. As Peter said:

> "Not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even unto us who did eat and drink with him after he rose from the dead" (Acts x. 41).

Celsus of old argued that if Jesus really rose He ought to have compelled admissions from His enemies —obtained signed certificates, one might suppose, from Annas and Caiaphas, countersigned by Pontius Pilate! It was characteristic of Jesus's ministry that He refused to make any attempt to coerce men to faith. His own account of the wilderness temptations shows how thoroughly He had thought that out; He refused any possible methods of that sort because of the supreme value He attached to human personality and His respect for its freedom. We may recall His reference to the "twelve legions of angels" and recognise that had He desired such an extorted submission He might as well have compelled it before Calvary.

We should then have had evidence given at the time by outside observers, to be examined as the Society for Psychical Research examines the evidence for ghost stories, and to remain an eternal intellectual problem. We have instead the gospels, written to preserve for the Church the permanent significance of the event, written by believers for believers: and we

have also the certainty that, but for the resurrection of Christ from the dead, not a book of the New Testament would ever have been written.

> " Judas (not Iscariot) saith unto him, Lord, what is come to pass that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me he will keep my word: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him " (John xiv. 22 f.).

Men do not *effectively* believe in Jesus until they love Him; what they see depends upon themselves, on what they have the capacity to perceive. Celestial melodies can bring no music to deaf ears; " love only apprehendeth love."

The knowledge of Christianity depends on education, intellectual capacity, and culture: the knowledge of *Christ* depends upon reverence, obedience and love. If these are lacking, " neither will they be persuaded, if one rise from the dead."

Some who will not be so persuaded tell us that the whole story is a legend which grew up around His memory. But even a legend must obey law and take time for its development and growth. This is a " legend " which never had time to grow up! Within three days the despondent disciples were rejoicing and sure. Within two months Peter was challenging his fellow-nationals at Jerusalem, " Ye killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead." If it were a legend surely in Jerusalem it would have been exploded at once by a visit to the tomb alleged to be empty.

The full resources of official Judaism were speedily brought to bear to suppress this heresy which was so surely calculated to undermine their power. Why did they not triumphantly confute the allegations by opening the tomb ?

Within five years the man who felt that it was his special mission to extirpate this dangerous heresy had become its chief evangelist, staking his whole faith upon the resurrection of Jesus—" if Christ hath not been raised, our preaching is vain."

Here at any rate was a man who must have been aware of the facts. If that tomb *was* empty—and surely he was not a man to be content with mere hearsay—Paul must have thought that the disciples had effected the removal of the body. He took the most antagonistic point of view possible to this alleged miracle. For him it was a wicked and dangerous attack upon their ancient faith, something to be stamped out at once and at all costs. Can we really believe that any experience on the Damascus road could have so completely changed his outlook if he *knew* all the time that the tomb was still occupied by the remains of the Crucified, or that it had been surreptitiously violated? Is it even intelligent to assume that he lent himself to such a vulgar deception, underwent tremendous privations, toiled so terrifically and achieved such triumphs for the sake of perpetuating a pious fraud? Surely Paul came over to the Christian faith because he was convinced that the disciples were honest men and that their story was true.

The life and deeds of Paul must remain an insoluble riddle unless it be allowed that he had an unshakable

belief in the resurrection of Jesus, a belief acquired only at the cost of the complete overthrow of his fiercest previous convictions. Because of that belief he led the great attack of Christianity on the prevalent materialism of his age; an attack that was not philosophical but an appeal to an alleged fact—the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Attention has been called in this connection to later propagations of marvels. The legends that clustered round the shrine of the murdered Thomas à Becket are a good instance; it has been pointed out how prolific was the crop within a comparatively short period. But these were stories of a popular martyr, springing up on favourable soil, assiduously cultivated by the not inconsiderable resources of a powerful Church. The doctrine of the resurrection was proclaimed and propagated in the face of bitterest opposition, in far less time, and with little or no worldly resources behind it.

Again and again attempts are made to " rationalise " the interpretation of the history; to explain it by explaining it away. Mr Weigall in *The Paganism in our Christianity* re-discovers one oft-discovered explanation. " Pilate marvelled that he was already dead." So says the record. Mr Weigall allows us to take that statement as significant history, on condition, apparently, that we ignore the historical value of other statements made in the same record. The " marvelling " is a clear indication that He was not " already dead." He was apparently dead, but not actually dead. Awakened from a death-like swoon by the chill of the rock tomb at night and by the pungent odours

of the spices, He either managed to crawl out unobserved or was conveyed thence by friends. The Essenes are useful at this point, perhaps because so little is known about them and there is a tradition that they always wore white garments.

We are then to suppose a poor, physically broken man, dragging out a few more years of a purposeless earthly existence and then dying in secret: this existence successfully concealed from all—friends and enemies alike. It was the useless and unprofitable secret of a few people who never allowed a hint of the truth to escape and died without leaving a shred of evidence of the grimmest and cruellest fraud ever perpetrated at humanity's expense. To perpetuate it the men of the New Testament and a host—an ever-growing host—of others lived, endured great hardships, and died. In the strength of this inspiration they built the Christian Church, its foundation well and truly laid in fraud so that it might last through the ages of the ages. If we are to accept that as true history then Christendom must be the world's home for the preservation of the feeble-minded.

Strauss surely effectually disposed of suggestions of this type long ago:[1]

> "It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to the disciples the impression that he

[1] *New Life of Jesus*, vol. i, p. 412 (English translation).

> was a conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life; an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no means have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship." [1]

Christianity did not begin in mere loyalty to a martyred leader; it was the spontaneous and inevitable outburst of life evoked by the living presence of a Living Lord.

Another " rationalisation " which has had considerable popularity is scarcely more complimentary to human intelligence. It is, briefly, that delusion accounts for all. One reason for its recent popularity is that the young science of psychology has appeared to lend some colour to this type of explanation.

On this theory the whole story of the resurrection originated, in the first instance, in hysteria; there were " visions about "—perhaps it would be more respectful to use the scientific term and call them hallucinations. Mary Magdalene, as was first learnt from the diagnosis of M. Ernest Renan, was the hysterical subject. Possibly M. Renan was anticipated to some extent by the apostles themselves, who regarded the reports of the women as " idle talk." It is explained that we know so little as yet of the obscure workings of the human mind that we cannot expect

[1] *New Life of Jesus*, vol. i, p. 412 (English translation).

to solve all the problems raised by this hallucination theory; but its advocates encourage us to expect that some day it will be found to account for everything. Meanwhile, a few of the obviously unsolved problems the theory raises are,—What law governed the self-limitation of these hallucinations? How was it that so many people experienced them, collectively as well as individually? What enabled them to give such remarkably rational accounts of incidents and conversations of considerable duration; to furnish a number of unexpected details, details so appropriate that only an imaginative writer of exceptional genius could possibly have foreseen as ideal for the purpose; and, above all, to give an artless picture of the veritable Jesus of history under new and strange conditions without blurring a single line of the wonderful composite portrait of Him achieved by the four evangelists?

The portraits of the disciples are also in the gospels, though they are not consciously telling us about themselves. They appear as men slow to believe, unable to understand, unable to convince a heart-broken comrade of the reality of their own experience of the risen Master which he did not happen to share. But they are quite sure that Easter was real; nothing can shake their testimony on this point. They saw Him dead. They saw Him alive again; and saw Him repeatedly. They saw the unbelieving comrade convinced. This stirred them to "these things which ye both see and hear." It was "the power of his resurrection"; and their one concern was to proclaim that power. The phrase is Paul's, and he tells in his letter to the Romans what it meant to him; he observed

the change it had made in his own life. Doing good and restraining passion, which had seemed beyond his power however strongly he had willed it, had become natural and normal by virtue of a union effected between the risen Lord and himself. Therefore, said he, such a marked effect must have a real cause: therefore Christ was assuredly alive (cf. Rom. viii.).

The apostles had to face the unbelief of ignorance; they declared "what they had seen and known." The Church must continually face the disbelief of the day by declaring what she has felt and experienced and by challenging the disbeliever to make trial of a like experience. Ultimately the authority of truth is in the fact that it is true; and the expert is made by experiment and experience.

At the close of his *Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*,[1] Dr Kirsopp Lake quotes from the late Dr Hastings Rashdall:

> "The disappearance or absolute annihilation, the reanimation, or the sudden transformation into something not quite material and yet not quite spiritual, of a really dead body, would involve the violation of the best ascertained laws of physics, chemistry, and physiology. . . . But . . . there is nothing to be said against the possibility of an appearance of Christ to his disciples, which was a real though supernormal psychological event, but which involved nothing which can be properly spoken of as a suspension of natural law."

[1] P. 269.

This seems to mean that the historical fact of the empty tomb must be rejected, not because of the nature of the historical evidence, but because it is a fact in conflict with the best ascertained natural laws. In other words, it is no use bringing any amount of evidence because natural laws have discounted the evidence in advance. " Neither will they be persuaded if one rose from the dead."

On the other hand, appearances which are real, though supernormal psychological events, may be believed in, not on the grounds of historical fact but on grounds for which there is no evidence at all. In order to do this the " best ascertained natural laws " may, presumably, be altered or adjusted or whatever may be required to enable the " supernormal " to find its home there. This seems to be a method of having the best of the argument whichever side one may be inclined to take.

It would be interesting, and not quite without profit, to compare all this assertion about " best ascertained natural laws " with recent utterances of distinguished scientists; they are, as a whole, more coherent, more modest, and much less dogmatic about " natural law." Really, this is an attempt to find a position akin to that taken up more frankly by Dr Cadoux to which we referred above.[1]

The Christian faith is more than the faith in survival which constitutes the creed of the average spiritualist. The reappearance of Lazarus did not beget men again to a lively hope; nor was it regarded as equating him with God. The Lord's resurrection was full of

[1] *V. supra*, p. 81.

significance because it was *Jesus* who had been raised. People who think that the Christian faith rests entirely upon certain supernatural occurrences which by their very nature do not admit of verification will begin by questioning the evidence and end by denying the faith.

In the first three gospels the resurrection is simply presented; its meaning is not explained. In the fourth gospel Jesus is the Divine Word and Wisdom "made flesh." The Incarnation is the only possible way to that fellowship for which man is ever in quest; the knowledge is too high for us and we cannot attain to it; but Heaven can come down to us, and dwell among us. If John's theory is right; if Jesus is not merely a man so perfect that He must be made God, but is indeed God made man, however incomprehensibly, then the rest of the New Testament becomes intelligible. There the Christian faith in the Risen Lord has its permanent basis in the recognition of the spiritual supremacy of Jesus. That must be manifest in His Church if the outside world is to be brought into the faith. In the early days that was so manifest —"they took knowledge of them that they had been with Jesus."

It is not easy for men to be articulate about their instincts for immortality; but it is quite certain that man looks for more than spiritualism offers, which is simply proof of survival. The Christian faith offers triumph over death; it has always refused to remain in the cerements, has broken from the tomb and lived with the true disciples. It is a faith in a resurrection that is more than the victory of the spirit over the physical phenomenon of death; it is a faith in the

complete victory of the personality, of the Soul—if by "Soul" we may be allowed to denote the complete personality, all that is eternal in human nature. It is a faith that the truth grasped by the Psalmist, "Thou hast put all things under his feet," is ultimate truth: and that we may say with the writer to the Hebrews, "Now we see not yet all things put under his feet . . . but . . . we see Jesus."

The fact of the empty tomb on Easter morning may not be easy to accept, but it is fairly generally recognised that to reject it means handling ancient historical documents in a manner so arbitrary as to be quite unscientific. But it is well to recognise also what we are about when by the exercise of imagination we conclude that there is some perfectly normal and ordinary explanation of it, now lost to history.

If the survival of Jesus was simply that of millions before and since, Death still reigns; its power is not broken; "we are of all men most pitiable."

We are still the helpless subjects of the age-long struggle between Darkness and Light, between two irreconcilably hostile powers.

But if, as the Christian faith asserts, that tomb was indeed empty we may see some light on the ultimate destiny of matter. Surely if it also is the creation of God it is ultimately redeemable; and Paul implies this in his identification of man with the travail of the whole creation, and in his inspired phrase about the redemption of the body—in contrast with Oriental philosophy which regards matter as inherently, irredeemably, evil.

If Christ came to restore harmony to a disordered

world and to resolve its discords, the immemorial antithesis of Spirit and Matter is the most conspicuous of them all; we see it in our own bodies, as Paul reminded the Romans. According to the resurrection narratives a synthesis was indeed achieved in the Person of the one Mediator and perfect harmony between spirit and matter has been restored. His material body is still a material body, but completely under the dominion of the spirit and its perfect vehicle.

The story of the resurrection is the account of the full entrance of the spiritual into human history, and that in so effective a manner that the whole development of the race is thereby transformed into a realisation of the Divine idea and purpose. Its immediate message is one of new hope for all, however damaged: that when we are at the end of all human resource we are only at the beginning of the resources of infinite love and power.

That was the faith of the early Church. Can the Church of today be loyal to its heritage if it is content to whittle down its significance and relegate it to an occasional place in its teaching? And when it does so teach, to send forth the music of immortality from a trumpet of uncertain sound?

A favourite theme of romancers is some "lost" people, the survivors of a half-forgotten past, inhabiting some inaccessible plateau or island, with no knowledge of our world of today, but with their own legends and traditions of strange places beyond their imprisoning seas or mountains. In these romances it is usually an up-to-date scientist who penetrates their fastness and returns after great adventures to civilisation.

Let us imagine instead that one of these lost people gets out and then returns to tell his own folk that there is a way over the unscalable heights, or lands beyond the trackless ocean. What a change will come over their whole attitude to life!

The earliest disciples were just such a "lost" people, with their legends and rumours but knowing only there was some undiscovered bourne from which no traveller returns. Their Master went from them. And He returned. Now, men can only be told what they are able to take in. The people of Mr H. G. Wells' *Country of the Blind* could not be told of colour and form, for they had no concepts to which they could relate such things. So when Jesus came back He could not tell much concerning conditions for which our mode of life has no related concepts. But He could Himself be the evidence for the supreme facts. He was "this same Jesus," alive, clear and conscious. Personality, character, memory, relationships, one's Self survives the physical change we call death.

> "Fear not, I am the first and the last and the Living One. I died and, behold, I am alive for evermore, and have the keys of death and of Hades."

The power of the resurrection faith in the first Christian age lay in this, that it was their Master's complete victory over death and the grave, and in that victory was the promise and potency of a like triumph for all.

> "When thou hadst overcome the sharpness of death, thou didst open the Kingdom of Heaven to all believers."

The Christian Gospel, as Dr Cairns has said, is not a gospel of submission, but of rebellion; of rebellion against death, Nature's last word, and of victory over it by

" the power of his resurrection."

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